

**GOODBYE
TO
PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophical blogs

August 2017 – September 2018

D. R. Khashaba

2018

To

JANE

**Your enthusiasm gave me
a glimpse of hope**

Nought is but that which feels itself to be.

Shelley, *Hellas*.

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In lieu of preface

GOODBYE TO PHILOSOPHY

(posted on September 7, 2018)

Today I am five days into my ninety-second year. It is high time to say goodbye not only to philosophy but to the whole of life and the world; rather it is high time for life and the world to say goodbye to me. That is not however my reason for saying goodbye to philosophy.

The reason is that I have nothing more to say. For a considerable time now I have been reiterating what I have said time and time again. There is an apparent paradox in my saying this, for I have repeatedly asserted that in philosophy there can be no fixity and no final say.

The resolution of the paradox is quite simple. In the majority of my writings I have not been creatively philosophizing but delivering a message, a message conveying a certain understanding of the nature of philosophy. Therefore in most of what I have been writing I have not been creatively philosophizing but sermonizing. I believed I had a mission, a message to deliver and I have done all I could to deliver it; if it has not been received, who is to judge if the fault lay in me or in those to whom the message was addressed? Though I am grieved, my conscience is not troubled.

This does not mean I am resolved to write nothing more. The Arabic saying goes: “A piper dies with his finger wiggling.” But I wish to devote most of what more time I am given to enjoying all the poetry I have been wanting to read.

Early in past August I fixed for myself three tasks to finish before the end of September:

(1) To complete the correction of the bungled version of *Back to Socrates*; this has been accomplished when I uploaded a revised and augmented version under a new title: *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*.

(2) To complete and upload “2998”. This has been done.

(3) To collect blogs posted from August 2017 to September 2018. I hope to upload a collected volume before the end of this September.

I hope my handful of readers will not judge me too harshly.

D. R. Khashaba

September 7, 2018

September 25, 2018

I

A WHIMSICAL THOUGHT

I am convinced that we can never know what goes on in animals' minds. All the sophisticated experiments carried out by psychologists, philosophers of mind, and others, will teach us many interesting and useful things but will never give us access to the holy-of-holies of an animal's mind. For that matter, you can never know (have immediate cognizance of) what goes on in your own brother's mind or of your son's mind, since the musings of the mind are sheer subjectivity. I would say that God cannot have immediate cognizance of what goes on in my mind because She can only know what's in my mind objectively while the essence

of my thought is subjectivity. All of this is not part of the whimsy: it is lucid reasoning.

I feel, I strongly believe, that animals have feelings, emotions, and sentiments. I have cats in mind, surrounded as I am by my granddaughter's seven cats (three generations). Again we cannot really know, but I feel sure they have a rich inner life. (Somewhere I wrote that a butterfly must be as beautiful within as it is without.) I do not use the word 'subjectivity' here though I cannot think of a good reason against its use.

The moral: I think that cruelty to animals, not only physical cruelty but also hurting their feelings, is as vile as cruelty to human beings. When Shelley wrote "I wish no living thing to suffer pain" he was truly inspired.

Dear Reader, these are raw thoughts for you to think out for yourself and come out with your own thoughts. This is what all philosophy should be.

D. R. Khashaba

August 7, 2018

II

ARGUMENT IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES

Note: I assume that the reader of this paper will have been well acquainted with the *Symposium* of Plato, else I would have had to make it much longer by giving much incidental and background material.]

Lately I upset some of my best friends by writing a paper titled "Plato's Greatest Hoax". I wonder how anyone who knew my writings could think I meant to denigrate Plato when I designate my philosophy as a version of Platonism. I am now venturing to stir another hornets' nest. What for? Certainly not to censure Plato but to highlight what is most profound and most valuable in Plato, to separate the tinsel from the gold. The bane of the founders of all world religions has been that they were sanctified.

First, to avoid unnecessary confusion or misunderstanding let us be clear about what is meant by ‘argument’ here, for ‘argument’ is a flabby word that houses a wide range of connotations. In a loose wider sense any exposition of thought is commonly referred to as an argument but in a narrower strict sense an argument is meant to establish or demonstrate the truth of a certain conclusion. It is this narrower meaning with which we are concerned in this paper.

Since Plato tells us plainly that no serious thinker will leave his best thought in a written text (*Phaedrus*, 275c); since he tells us in the *Republic* (533c) that the grounds of all philosophical positions must be demolished by dialectic; since he gives us in the *Parmenides* a practical demonstration of this dialectic demolition of foundations — what are we to make of all the arguments and proofs in the dialogues? Not to mention that our erudite scholars have not been slow to shred to tatters the best of Plato’s theoretical arguments.

Often in the dialogues an argument is simply a move in the dramatic action. Sometimes in the elenctic discourses the argument seems to lead to a definite conclusion when suddenly Socrates discovers that they

were on a wrong track (*Charmides, Lysis*). In the *Protagoras* Socrates argues for the identity of courage and wisdom; Protagoras finds a flaw in the argument and Socrates simply drops it (350c). In short, the argument (in the narrower sense) in a Platonic dialogue is regularly a ploy in the drama and is never meant for itself.

I have said this before but it bears repetition: No original thinker arrives at his profoundest insights by a process of logical reasoning. (See *Plato's Universe of Discourse*, 2015.) A philosopher may find in logical reasoning a helpful tool for the exposition and elucidation of her or his thought but to begin with sheer reasoning with the intention of reaching a meaningful conclusion is to put the cart before the horse and has been the source of all the falsehoods and absurdities of theology and vacuous 'metaphysical systems'. I have been saying this repeatedly: in this paper I will illustrate it by instances from the speech of Socrates in the *Symposium* (198-212) where we find the husk of logical argument and the grain of philosophical insight side by side, in close proximity but unmixed. .

Socrates begins by protesting that he cannot speak in the manner of the speakers who preceded him, who

thought they had to heap praises on Eros regardless of the truth. Socrates said he would only speak the truth (198d). We will see what kind of truth that turns out to be, revealing to us the chasm separating philosophical ‘truth’ from the truth of science and commonsense.

Socrates prepares the ground for his speech by a short discourse with Agathon in the elenctic manner (199c-201d). The bare skeleton of the core argument is something like this: Love is love of something – Love is love of the beautiful and the good – Love desires to have what it loves – one does not desire to have what one already has – put differently, one does not have what one desires to have – one desires to have what one lacks – (marginally, to say that one who is healthy desires to have health only makes sense if taken to mean that one desires to have health continually) – we said that Love is love of the beautiful and the good – it follows that love does not have beauty and goodness, in other words Love is not beautiful and not good.

We see that the argument is grounded on the identification of love with desire, a step facilitated by the fact that the love discussed is erotic love, though even so, we can object that in wholesome erotic love the lov-

er does not desire to possess the beloved. Anyhow, when we come to the philosophical vision in the higher flight of Diotima's pronouncement, we will see how she, though putatively starting from the same position delineated in Socrates' conversation with Agathon, actually throws that whole argument out the window. The deeper insights in the speech of Socrates (Diotima) has no connection with the logical argument which is mere show required by the dramatic setting of the *Symposium*

Next Socrates relates how the wise Diotima taught him the secrets of love, beginning with the argument which he had just re-enacted with Agathon. I bypass the pretty story of the birth of Eros. Like the argument and equally with the argument it is part of the tinsel not the gold. I also bypass what she says about the nature, character and office of Eros.

Diotima begins the metamorphosis of the concept of love by making the word stand for all desire for good (294e-205e). Further, not only do humans love to have the good but they love to have the good for all time (206a). Let us note that Diotima has thus cut all ties to the body and to all that is worldly and let us

note further that she has left behind all argumentation. She no longer argues but teaches with oracular authority. Love has become a universal (metaphysical) principle.

Diotima proceeds: How does Love attain its end? In what activity does it engage? At this point Diotima (= Socrates, = Plato) fires the most pregnant phrase in all philosophy: the aim and the activity of love is procreation in beauty, *tokos en kalôi* (206b). Love as a metaphysical principle is simply creativity. We have left far behind the *erôs* that in the argumentative stage was equated with the desire to have, to possess, and have reached the notion of Love whose nature is to give, to overflow, to create.

Plato takes us to a new level when he makes Diotima say to Socrates: Thus far you could be initiated into the secrets of Love, but I don't know if you can enter the higher mystery for which all that went before was a preparation. She proceeds to describe, in an inspired and inspirational passage, the ascent of the lover, culminating in the mystic vision of absolute Beauty.

The pregnant notion of procreation in Beauty, the ascent to the vision of absolute Beauty — these are presented in oracular pronouncements, without any show of argument or proof. The preliminary argument equating love with the desire to have what one lacks is discarded on the way. I maintain that this is representative of all of Plato's dialogues. As I put it elsewhere, where you find Plato arguing most astutely, be sure that he is least serious. The divinity of the soul, the philosophic life, tending the soul and tending virtue, the Form of the Good, reality as *dunamis* (activity, creativity), etc., etc., these are creative notions offered without proof or argument in the narrower sense.

D. R. Khashaba

August 22, 2017

III

NINETY

Reflections on my ninetieth birthday

Today I turned the last page of my ninetieth year, a long, long journey by any measure. In my youth and early manhood I never thought I would reach sixty.

What have I made of this ample gift of lifetime that I have been given? The first stretch of thirty-two years (I have my reason for hitting on this odd figure) was a mixture of good fortune and constraining circumstances aggravated by wrong decisions. I was born and brought up by good, loving parents and had good, loving siblings. (I was the youngest.) I had intermittent but in the main good schooling. Fundamentally I am an autodidact. Those first thirty-two years, apart from the constrained and constraining conditions, were the

best. I read voraciously and formed the core of my philosophy.

I married at thirty-two and the marriage was blessed with a daughter but my wife soon developed a psychic condition that engulfed us (husband, wife, and daughter) in profound misery. The doctors did not care to give me a diagnosis but only wrote long prescriptions. There were periods of hospitalization. For some thirty years I could not read, could not think, was practically a zombie; one phrase I constantly whispered to myself, “my soul has rusted”; the only thing that kept me alive was that I could not abandon my helpless wife and daughter.

My poor wife passed away in 1990. That opened up the third stretch of my life story. My daughter had already graduated and married. I read like mad. In 1998 I self-published (with generous financial help from my employer) what I thought would be my first and last book: *Let Us Philosophize*, published by Avon Books, London, who went into liquidation only two years later.

The book met with the inescapable fate of self-published works. But in various ways I reached a

handful of philosopher-friends who valued my work. I had articles published in *Philosophy Pathways*, The sadly short-lived *Examined Life Online Journal*, and other online journals. From 2005 to the present day I self-published eleven books, including a revised edition of *Let Us Philosophize*.

I know that every writer thinks highly of her or his work; still I think I am not deceived in believing that my work deserves more than the meager attention it has received. My philosophy, I claim, is philosophy in the now suspect grand manner that unites epistemology, ontology, and axiology in an original consistent whole – not as a fixed system or body of theory (which is anathema to me as to Plato) but rather as an integral whole of insights: such only is genuine metaphysics. I designate it an original version of Platonism, but I depart from Plato's position at points and offer an original interpretation of some important aspects of Plato's philosophy that have been inexplicably ignored by academic and professional philosophers. At this point a note of clarification is due: the preceding lines indicate the essential core of my philosophy but actually the bulk of my writings is taken up by the exposition

and propagation of the special understanding of the nature of philosophy underlying that core.

I have made all my work freely downloadable from my wordpress.com site, archive.org, and from the free e-books section of ArabWorldBooks.com. I dream that at some near or distant future my work will be properly valued and will have its place in mainstream philosophy side by side with the work of Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer.

I don't know what more time I will be given beyond this my ninetieth birthday. Anyway, in the nature of things it cannot be long. I have no set plans for any future work. I will read for enjoyment and try to minimize some of the numerous and very wide gaps in my *paideia*. If anything writes itself I will post it on my two blogs.

D. R. Khashaba

September 3, 2017

IV

DOES PHILOSOPHY SEEK TRUTH?

The saying that philosophy seeks truth is commonly received as a truism. There is indeed a rare remote sense of the word ‘truth’ in which it is natural and proper to say that philosophy seeks truth: that is the exalted sense of Truth as a moral value. But in the commonsense meaning of the word, it is highly misleading and confusing to join philosophy and truth.

In the common acceptation of the term, truth implies the agreement of a statement or belief with an objective state of affairs. This is the meaning of ‘truth’ in science, in history, in law; but in philosophy it is totally irrelevant.

For millennia philosophers in the Western tradition (but not in China or India) have been deluded into

thinking that they are required and can reach factual knowledge about the objective world. It is this erroneous belief that has exposed Western philosophy to ridicule and scorn culminating in Hume's injunction to commit all metaphysical works to the flames and in the Positivists' equating of metaphysics with nonsense.

Philosophy as the investigation of the mind, in the mind, by the mind (Plato), as the pure exercise of pure Reason (Kant), is as unrelated to the objective world as the parables of the Nazarene. A myth of Plato's, a parable of Jesus' a poem of Shelley's have the same quality of — not 'truth' but spiritual vision.

Thus translators err in translating Plato's *alêtheia* as 'truth': in other contexts that would be the natural and proper translation, but in Plato *alêtheia*, *ousia*, *to on*, *ho estin*, all equally refer to reality or what is real, since for Plato the mind and the ideas in the mind are all the reality that we know.

Like poetry, philosophy creates its own 'truths', or better said, its own realities.

D. R. Khashaba

September 22, 2017

V

BEING AND BECOMING

metaphysics in a nutshell

Being and becoming — these two little words sum up the whole of metaphysics.

From the dawn of reflective thinking humans have wondered about how the world has come about. They invented myths to calm down the nagging perplexity and wonder within themselves. This was not yet metaphysical thinking. Even the Ionian cosmogonists were only looking for the primordial stuff of all things.

In time – and perhaps from the earliest times – there were intellects that raised the deeper question: how and why is it that there is anything at all rather than nothing? Was this a more profound question or was it

just a foolish, meaningless question? — For it is an absolutely unanswerable question. To say that God created the world is the height of inanity, equally with the modern astrophysicists' suggestion that in the beginning was the Big Bang. This may be a good working scientific hypothesis but as an answer to the metaphysical question it is rotten. Both the theologian and the astrophysicist leave the ultimate 'HOW and WHY' gaping.

Being, sheer being, or the being of the world which we find ourselves in, is just there, an ultimate mystery. It is only when we confess the ultimacy of the mystery of Being that the metaphysical quest begins in earnest. The world is there, always there, and yet it is never the same. Everything in the world is constantly changing. The mighty mountains no more than human flesh, no more than the dainty flower, no more than the dewdrop, no more than the rainbow can boast permanence: the mountains, like everything in nature, in coming to be are passing away. They are a vortex that is never the same: their stability and permanence are a fiction created by the human mind. We seek a law, a principle, a pattern that renders this universal flux intelligible.

The problem of Becoming merges with the problem of Being (Reality). Things that be (exist) in truth have no being (reality) but are ceaselessly becoming, ceaselessly vanishing; in Becoming things have their fugitive reality. In wrestling with the problem of Becoming we have the metaphysical answer to the problem of Reality.

For Plato what is ultimately real is the Form of the Good that gives birth to intelligence and reality. And where do we find the Form of the Good? The mind in itself, all by itself, probing itself, gives birth to the idea of the Form of the Good.

In the reality of the mind, as our own inner reality, I find the pattern and principle of all Reality, and in our own intelligent creativity, I find the pattern and the principle of ultimate Reality as pure intelligent creativity. Becoming is only intelligible if all reality is seen as creative and ultimate Reality as sheer creativity.

This is an idea bred in and by the mind; it can claim no objectivity; I call it a metaphysical vision and declare all metaphysical visions to be myths.

All genuine metaphysical thinking – say Spinoza's or Schopenhauer's— represents ultimate Reality by a

pattern created in the mind and by the mind, hence it is necessarily a myth, a metaphysical vision. What use is it then? A metaphysical vision, candidly confessed as myth, appeases our yearning to belong to the All, satisfies our need to find our own being and all being intelligible.

D. R. Khashaba

October 1, 2017

VI

HERACLITUS

a tentative construction

In this paper I try to reconstruct out of Heraclitus's disjointed fragments a plausible synoptic outlook. Such an attempt is not only risky; it is outright foolhardy especially in my case with my confessedly elementary knowledge of Greek. My only excuse is that I present this not as a contribution to Heraclitus scholarship – I hope I am not that mad yet – but as an attempt to outline a reasonable metaphysical view of my own from intimations suggested by dabbling in Heraclitus's obscure oracular phrases.

I venture to say that we do not go far wrong if we say that Heraclitus was the first metaphysician (pardon the anachronism) in Western thinking, leaving

aside Chinese and Hindu thinkers for the moment. Thales and Anaximenes were cosmologists. They tried to think out how all things came out of some primitive stuff. Xenophanes was more of a *philosophe*: he would have been quite at home with the thinkers of the Enlightenment.

But Heraclitus sought to understand how there could be anything at all rather than nothing. And in trying to find an answer to that question he did not look for a primal thing or stuff from which the world could be worked out, nor even for a primal Chaos, which would be an existent thing, leaving the metaphysical question unanswered or rather unasked: for in philosophy it is the question that opens up vistas for endless exploration.

In seeking the first origin and beginning of all things Heraclitus did not look for a thing – neither stuff nor god – but for a principle: the Logos, the nearest thing in Western thinking to the Tao in Lao Tzu's thought. The Logos is not an entity, not even a primeval mind, but a creative principle. Yet thus far we are still leaving things hanging in the air.

Heraclitus speaks of the need to follow Logos (*dei hepesthai*) and complains that though Logos is common, people live *hôs idean echontes phronêsin*, as if they owned their thinking privately. I find this highly significant. If and when we follow reason we would be following the common understanding (*Logos*). It is this common understanding that puts us in touch with what is real. Seek as we may, we will never find a criterion of reality other than its being intelligible, open to the understanding. (This is also the core insight of Parmenides.) And it is this that supports and justifies our finding in the Logos, which transcends being, the origin of all being.

Further, I find this supports and is supported by Heraclitus's looking for reality and understanding not in any external thing or in a god external to the world but in his innermost being, in his soul.

It may not be out of place here to clarify my view of the nature and limits of metaphysical thinking. From what I have already said above it is clear that to my mind metaphysics seeks to delineate an outlook in which we find the world and life and in particular human life intelligible. The whole quest of metaphysics

takes its course within the individual mind. Thus a metaphysician is entitled to say: Here is a vision in terms of which I find the world intelligible. I believe that the fatal error in which most metaphysicians fall is to claim that the vision they present is the one true vision. Kant was right when he asserted that pure reason cannot tell us anything about the actual world. Metaphysicians who claim that they disclose the reality of the world are superstitious dogmatists.

What use then is metaphysics? I maintain that neither science nor philosophy can speak of reality. Yet we cannot live without metaphysical philosophy, unless we are content to live in a world that in itself is meaningless and remains meaningless to us.

That Heraclitus insists on the eternity and absolute autonomy of the cosmos is made amply clear when he asserts that the world was made by neither god nor man. I go back again and again to this point because, in my view, the acceptance of Being (Reality, World, Cosmos, what you will) as an ultimate mystery is the essence of Metaphysics. To suppose any determinate beginning to the world, be it Aristotle's Uncaused Cause or the Big Bang, lands us in absurdities.

To the question “How did the world come about?” the only sane answer is “We don’t know”. But of the many metaphors in which that sane answer may be attired, two give me satisfaction. (1) Ultimate Reality is Eternal Creativity or Creative Eternity. (2) Ultimate Reality is Love, for Love is a ceaseless outflow, an eternal act of giving. In deference to Heraclitus I will also accept his *pur aeizôon*, ever-living Fire.

Many philosophers have given good answers to the metaphysical question. The fly in the ointment in every case has been that they present their metaphors as if they were factual reports about the actual world. Only Plato was free from this error since he gave his vision in myth and parable and metaphor. In the light of the outline I gave above, Heraclitus too may have been free of this error.

D. R. Khashaba

November 2, 2017

VII

AI VERSUS HUMANS

The Independent reports that “Stephen Hawking warns artificial intelligence ‘may replace humans altogether’.” To my mind this is not what we should worry about nor should we worry about the related question if or when will ‘thinking machines’ surpass humans in intelligence. Neither of these issues should be what we have to worry about most and prepare for.

To begin with, we have to be clear as to what we mean by AI. We already have computers that make in seconds calculations that it takes Stephen Hawking hours to make. On the other hand, bees, birds, and many other animal species make problem-solving feats that surpass human powers. It is not this or that kind of ‘thinking’ in which we should take pride and which

gives us our distinctive character as humans. Stephen Hawking is not Stephen Hawking because he can make complicated computations but because he can create imaginative scenarios for the birth and death of galaxies and black holes. A computer could easily beat Einstein at making calculations but could never come up with the notion of curved or warped space.

I said there are computers that beat Stephen Hawking in a specific kind of problem-solving but – and this is a most important but – it is Stephen Hawking that puts the question to the computer. The computer may even seem to do something on its own that keeps Hawking wondering how it was done, but the computer, having done its miracle, does not wonder how it did it. We might say that human minds have the capacity of doing second-level thinking, can think about thinking. So this is one element among others that gives us our distinctive human character.

Then, we have values, even when they are corrupt and vicious values: we do something not because the total configuration of the physical universe at that moment necessitates it (as Laplace dreamed) but – another stupendous but – because we want to do it, we

will it. (I know positivists contest that. This is not the place to argue that out.)

The age of the ‘thinking machine’ is already with us. The questions we have to think about and prepare for are: (1) Who is to set the aims and ask the questions put to the machine to answer? (2) What are the values we care for and want to preserve? (My worry in both cases is not that the machines may do that but the wrong humans.)

Regrettably, while the world leaders and thinkers are busy planning and devising more and still more destructive missiles and missiles to intercept missiles and while world leaders and thinkers are thinking about power grabbing and about subordination and exploitation the less fortunate peoples or else worrying about the next financial crisis, nobody is giving any thought to how to make a saner and more just organization of the human family

Nothing short of a revolution in human thinking and in the global world organization will save us from a robot-governed world whose programmed aim and purpose is to reach the highest rate of production and consumption even if that involves numerous pockets of

poverty, famine, misery and disease while elsewhere surplus food is destroyed and the weapons industry and the pharmaceutical industry are heaping blood-stained wealth.

D. R. Khashaba

November 5, 2017

VIII

A CONFSSIONAL

An email from a dear philosopher-friend set me thinking; every new line I went through evoked in my mind a question or more than one question. Of one thing, only one, I was certain: that I had no answer to any of those questions. It occurred to me to put everything aside for a while to reflect.

I am ninety. Leaving aside my early childhood and leaving aside a not inconsiderable stretch of time in when my circumstances were inimical to philosophical thinking, I can say that throughout my life I have been philosophizing, and what have I to show for all that? While writing these lines another thought occurred to me. For some time, especially since my ninetieth birthday a few weeks ago, I have been thinking of how

best to make use of the days I may still have to live. The thought that has just occurred to me is to start a confessional: daily (as far as possible) to devote some time to reflect, write down my reflections, and if they make up a book or booklet, then I should collect these reflections in book form and make it available with the rest of my books. But let not the reader expect anything exciting — the life I would record in this confessional is the life of my thought, not of emotions or passions or events (except incidentally) that give autobiographical writings their relish.

Let me go back to the reflections I started with. What have I to show for my lifelong philosophizing? The one thing that I can affirm confidently is that what we normally refer to as higher values – moral, aesthetic, intellectual – are what makes life worthwhile. All else is vanity of vanities. Perhaps it was such a thought that made Gautama the Buddha shun his luxurious palace life and wander with his followers preaching his insight; and it must have been this thought that made Tolstoy in his late years give up his wealth and choose to live a simple peasant life.

So this is the one thing I can affirm with confidence. Do I owe that to philosophy? Not wholly and not in the first place. That view was what I had started with; it gave rise to my philosophizing and was not the outcome of my philosophizing. The first seeds of my moral stance were planted at home in my early childhood. I had the great boon of growing up in a loving family. Next I fortunately happened at an early age to come across Plato's works and to adore Socrates. All I can say therefore is that philosophy consolidated my attachment to moral ideals.

However at this point I would surely not be honest if I let my words give the impression that I live up to my ideals. In addition to the common feebleness of human nature, a much extended period of misery and dejection has, I am sadly aware, injured my moral constitution. Hence I must make it plain that in saying that in my philosophy the one certain thing is that moral, aesthetic, and intellectual ideals are what gives life meaning and worth, I am speaking of my philosophical position and not of my person or my way of life. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

In the message of my philosopher-friend which I mentioned at the beginning my friend more than once speaks of God. Now I have to make plain that while my attachment to philosophy consolidated the moral values I gained in my childhood, it had the contrary effect on my religious beliefs, primarily on any belief in God. I started questioning the Church teachings when I was about fourteen. First to drop was faith in the tales of the Old Testament. Next certain aspects of orthodox Christian morality were questioned. With my earliest ventures into metaphysical thinking I came to see that any belief in a transcendent Creator is philosophically bankrupt.

For a time I believed and confidently asserted that ultimate Reality must be intelligent and good. Further on my philosophical reflections, promoted by Plato's works, convinced me that pure reason or purely theoretical thinking cannot answer any of our ultimate questionings. Though I no longer assert the intelligence and goodness as true of the actual world, yet I still hold that as the metaphysical vision in which I can find the world intelligible.

With Kant I hold that empirical science can only deal with the way things appear to us but cannot tell us about the ultimate nature of things. Pure reason too cannot tell us about the ultimate nature of things. Pure reason can only reflect on what Kant calls the Ideals of Reason. But Kant, to my mind, was inconsistent. He juggled with the Ideals of pure reason to ‘prove’ the existence of God and the immortality of the human soul.

I cannot attach any distinct meaning to the word God, unless we equate God with ultimate Reality. But again I say that neither empirical science nor metaphysical thinking can tell us about ultimate Reality.

Yet I do not throw metaphysical thinking overboard. I maintain that the Ideals of Pure Reason and the moral and aesthetic values give us a world of our own creation that enriches our life. I maintain that though we have no right to make our idea of ultimate Reality apply to the actual world, yet it gives our life integrity and value. In other words, I maintain that as poets and artists dream and by their dreams enrich our life, so a Plato, a Spinoza, a Santayana, dream and by dreaming give us an ideal world we live in for a

while just as we live in the worlds of Mozart, Goethe, or Shakespeare.

Dear Reader, I said above that this would be the first of a series of such reflections. I already doubt that I will be able to keep that promise. And yet, who knows?

D. R. Khashaba

November 8, 2017

IX

METAPHYSICS

**the creative art of wrestling with
unanswerable questions**

The name of the gracious goddess Philosophia has been handled so insipidly and for so long that it has come to mean all things and nothing. Take one example: experts in the techniques of Artificial Intelligence have been calling their science ‘philosophy’! So to keep close to what philosophy meant for, say, Plato, I will speak of ‘metaphysics’ even though this term (which neither Plato nor Aristotle knew) has not been spared mutilation and defamation.

Rather than asking “What is metaphysics?” I will ask “Who is a metaphysician?” and rather than head-

ing for an answer through rational discussion I will at once bluntly and audaciously give an oracular answer that I will defend by unfolding, amplifying, and elucidating the oracular pronouncement in what follows.

Here is the oracle: A metaphysician is an intelligent soul who throughout her life is irked by unanswerable questions.

In the morning of human life – be it the life of the human race or of an individual human being – the mind is troubled by endless questions about the wonders of nature and of life. In time the intelligent mind discovers that there are on the one hand answerable questions, even if the answers do not come readily or easily, and on the other hand there are questions that are unanswerable, not only that they are hard to crack or that they call for preparations or conditions that are not within reach, but that they are in their nature unanswerable. Answers to the answerable questions accumulated over time; they are the pith and core of our present-day science and technology. The computer I am working on now owes a debt to the first man or woman who struck two stones together to make fire.

Let me take leave of generalities for a while and move on to particulars. At the birth of Western philosophy in Greece (the profound cultures of China and India deserve special treatment) Thales, Anaximenes, Democritus – to pick some names at random – busying themselves with the stuff and the order of the cosmos, were laying the foundations of modern physics and modern astronomy. Stephen Hawking will tell you that he and his colleagues are still working on questions posed by those early Greek thinkers. On the other hand, Heraclitus was not concerned with the stuff of the world but with the soul that is too deep to fathom. Yes, Heraclitus as a genuine metaphysician was concerned with the soul, despite our materialist, positivist, empiricist scientists, and I do mean scientists, for our professors of ‘philosophy’ who have splintered philosophy into diverse specialized disciplines – whether they research the mind of a fly or the ‘intelligence’ of robots – are scientists doing perhaps good scientific work but not philosophy — for whom the soul is not unfathomed or unfathomable but an empty word without any meaning whatever. (I beg the Reader kindly to pardon me for this impatient amorphous rambling digression.)

Plato was concerned with moral values, a concern he inherited from Socrates, but he was also concerned with the question of ultimate reality and equally with the nature and provenance of knowledge. He had no answer to any of these questions. For the nature of knowledge he gave us the notion of Forms as ‘meanings’ conferred by the mind on things; for the provenance of knowledge he gave us the myth of reminiscence; for the problem of ultimate reality he gave us the allegory of the Form of the Good. Why could he not answer the questions that irked him throughout his life? These are unanswerable questions because Reality, Intelligence, Life, Goodness, Understanding, are ultimate mysteries and will always remain closed secrets to us. Plato gave no answers since he knew the questions were unanswerable, for his thinking was genuinely metaphysical.

Now we get the sensible question: Since these are mysteries that will always remain forbidden ground for us and since all questions relating to them must remain unanswered and unanswerable, why should we bother about them? Let us hear the oracle once again: “A metaphysician is an intelligent soul who throughout her life is irked by unanswerable questions.” Since

the mysteries of Being, Life, Mind, Goodness are what gives us being, life, mind, and goodness, to remain alive and to remain truly human we must never lose touch with those mysteries. An intelligent soul cannot but be lured by those mysteries and being troubled by questions relating to them. And since the questions are truly unanswerable, then it is only in myth, parable, and pregnant paradox that we voice what insight we are given to glimpse into them. And this applies not only to the metaphysician, but to the poet, the artist, the lover — to whomever is blessed with sensing the reality of those life-giving mysteries.

In modern times, especially in the present day, the practical achievements of science and technology have seduced us to focus our attention on exteriors — on the outer world and our own physical being. Scientists and philosophers-turned-scientists have led us not only to forget our inner reality but to completely deny that inner reality. I am convinced that the crises and troubles engulfing our world today are not unrelated to this loss of insight into our inner reality and loss of touch with the unspeakable metaphysical mysteries.

Let metaphysicians not be dismayed when their prophetic visions are mocked by the scientists and their league on the ground that those visions are not supported by facts: let them call on Kant for aid and let them tell scientists that their vaunted ‘facts’ are no more than fictions representing empty phenomena and that it is the metaphysicians and poets and artists who are in touch with the reality of the unfathomable soul.

D. R. Khashaba

November 25, 2017

X

IDEALISTS AND MATERIALISTS

1

It seems that there is in humans a division into two fundamental classes more radical and more far-reaching than the gender division of male and female. After all we know that the gender division is not hard and fast: there are males with a high ingredient of femininity and females with a high ingredient of masculinity. But among Idealists and Materialists there is no sharing and no common ground.

Plato twice asserts and underlines this distinction. In the *Sophist* we read:

“What we shall see is something like a Battle of Gods and Giants going on between them over

their quarrel about reality. ... One party is trying to drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands; for they lay hold upon every stock and stone and strenuously affirm that real existence belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define reality as the same thing as body, and as soon as one of the opposite party asserts that anything without a body is real, they are utterly contemptuous and will not listen to another word.” (246a-c).

In the *Crito* (49c-d) Socrates, having asserted his conviction that “we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to anyone”, goes on to say,

“... this opinion has never been held, and never will be held, by any considerable number of persons; and those who are agreed and those who are not agreed upon this point have no common ground, and can only despise one another when they see how widely they differ” (tr. Jowett).

Socrates was speaking of moral ‘idealism’ but we can apply what he says, word for word, to the metaphysical sphere, to what reality means to different

persons, to what is real and what is not real for different persons, which is what Plato was speaking of in the *Sophist* and which is what I am concerned with in this essay. This is a battle that has been raging between the two camps from Plato and Aristotle, through Bishop Berkeley and Dr. Johnson, to idealists and materialists today.

2

First I have to confess that I am semantically at a disadvantage. It is so common and so natural to speak of what can be touched and held in one's hand as real that it would be unrealistic to ask people to reverse this usage. What I can and do ask for is that in philosophical discussions we should keep in mind that the metaphysician's (Plato's say) 'reality' has nothing to do with the commonsense usage of the term. When I wrote my first book, *Let Us Philosophize*, I hesitated long between 'Reality' and 'Being' for designating what is ultimately real. 'Reality' was much burdened by the common usage of the term; 'Being' was so highly abstract as to feel stale. I have repeatedly said that my electing 'Reality' was foolish or at least unfortunate. But I don't think electing 'Being' instead would

have made much of a difference. I have lately found Berdyaev using the term ‘Spirit’ for what is ultimately real. For a while I said to myself I wish I had hit on that, but once again I don’t think that choice would have made any difference.

Thus once again, hoping against hope, I will try to clarify what I mean by what is real and what I, chiefly in common with Plato, mean by saying that the things we encounter in the world around us are – in the technical metaphysical sense of the term – not real.

3

We know that the things around us, from Dr. Johnson’s rock to Kim Jong-un’s nuclear missiles at no moment of time have a constantly stable being. Heraclitus knew that all things are constantly changing and that the sun that came up this morning is not the same sun that came up yesterday. Heraclitus affirmed this despite the fact that the state of knowledge at his time seemed to belie him. The mountains at least seemed fixed and firm. Now our scientists know that the supposed ‘particles’ constituting the Himalayas are in truth bodiless dancing faeries, that the sun today is one day nearer its final extinction, that the remotest

galaxies vie with our oceans in their ceaseless commotion. Modern science taught us that this red rose is not in itself red and that the colour I see is the joint product of a complex operation involving rays of light, the physiology of my eyes, and the hidden play of neurons in my brain. Scientists were so taken by their discoveries that they, and not any Idealists, denied the ‘reality’ of the red colour. It was left for A. N. Whitehead to call this denial the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.

In their search for what is ultimately real scientists went farther and farther away from the ‘commonsense real’. They sought the final constituent(s) of things, in other words, they continued the quest of Thales and Anaximenes. For a time the atom was triumphantly hailed as the answer, but then the ‘indivisible atom’ proved to be neither indivisible nor final. The old naïve materialism represented by Dr. Johnson’s solid rock was no longer viable. (The word is now used as a convenient blanket term for physicalism, scientism, empiricism, etc.) The search continued till we reached at one end Quantum Mechanics which nobody understands and at the other end the Big Bang characterized as a singularity which is a euphemism for absurdity.

But far more important than all of this is the following consideration: Supposing we reached a final objective thing, and quite apart from the question about the origin of that thing, we face the question: what supports that thing, what gives it its credentials for being?

Confessedly, the Idealist has no answer to that question any more than the empiricist, but there is a difference. The Platonist would say: We do not know of a single thing in the natural world whose being and whose character may not be subjected to doubt. Our own subjective being is the one and only thing whose self-evidence, immediate presence, and present immediacy are beyond all doubt. This of course is what Descartes affirms in his unfortunate formulation, *je pense, donc je suis*. This is the thought behind Kant's notion of the *noumenon* set against all the phenomena of the natural world. Shelley with the prophetic insight of a philosophical poet condenses it all in one line: "Nought is but that which feels itself to be" (*Hellas*).

But Platonism does not stop there. What is the worth of all the world, of all we encounter in it and all we do in it as against the delight of understanding, the

peace of loyalty, the bliss of generosity? What gift has the world to compare with the joy of intelligent contemplation?

6

To remove a widespread misunderstanding: neither Plato nor Berkeley nor any sane Idealist denied or doubted the actuality of the world around us. But which is more worthy of being held more real and more valuable: the hard world outside us or our mind and the verities of the mind within us? Socrates said it in a few words: The best thing for a human being is to discourse of virtue every day.

D. R. Khashaba

December 1, 2017

XI

GOD MUSES

WARNING: Dear Reader, these are black thoughts oozed in a black hour on a black day. You will be well advised to skip this crazy thing.

God sat musing.

When I created life — well, I didn't really create life. Life is an original dimension of my being – when I shaped life in myriads of shapes, from the tiger to the butterfly, from the dainty lizard to the hippopotamus, that was good. All life has intrinsic value. When life feeds on life, that is inbuilt in the nature of life; when life perishes, that is a normal consequence of the principle of transience ruling all finite existence.

Thus far all was good. But then I made my worst blunder. I created human beings. Humans, not content with their intrinsic value as living beings, created for themselves their own secondary values, aims, ideals, purposes. When these secondary values clashed within one individual human being, or when the values and purposes in certain human beings clashed with the values and purposes in other humans, there arose misery, frustration, dejection; there arose greed; there arose anger and hate. All of this overshadowed the original worth of life in human beings.

Many times have I thought of uprooting this grave error by destroying the human race totally. But then I saw maybe a single human being, one woman or one man that did not sully the intrinsic worth of life in them; at one time a Socrates here, at another time a Gautama there, at yet another time a simple woman who gave her life to save another life, and I repented.

But the evil generated by the wayward race has exceeded all measure. I'd better deceive myself no longer. The human experiment has turned sour. I must extirpate this vile weed. I must not let anything

weaken my resolve this time. What remains is to decide the means.

At one time I had almost decided; by a slight alteration in the speed of the Earth's rotation to send the polluted planet hurtling towards the Sun to be totally consumed. But this would end all life on Earth. True, I have shaped modes of life on other planets, but what wrong has the sleek scorpion or the nimble squirrel done to deserve this end? No. I will let the human race finish itself off. The fatal mix of greed and stupidity with which humans are brimful is sufficient to lead them to their inevitable end. In the process humans will have wreaked grave damage to the originally well-balanced environment of the Earth. This is a price that has to be paid. And the damage will be remedied when the cumulatively pernicious influence of humans has been removed. That's it! Leave them to the poisonous blend of greed and stupidity and they will soon end themselves.

D. R. Khashaba

December 7, 2017

XII

LIMITS OF SCIENCE

The title of Martin Rees' paper came to me like a pleasant surprise.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/12/limits-of-science/547649/> Throughout two decades in book after book and essay after essay I have been trying to drive home that philosophers and scientists should have learnt long ago from Plato and Kant a simple lesson, teaching that the very objectivity of science makes questions about the inner reality of things lie beyond the competence of science. I am writing this having read no more than the headlines of Rees' paper which I will now proceed to read and see if I have any comment to make or anything to add but I conjecture that Rees' position will not be as radical as Plato's or Kant's.

Rees starts by quoting a statement of Einstein's that I have repeatedly cited. (Marginally, Einstein was speaking as a philosopher, not as a scientist.) As I see it, the comprehensibility of the universe suggests that mind (intelligence) is an aspect of ultimate reality. But that does not make that ultimate reality accessible to the objective approach of science. The objectivity of science limits it, as Kant said, to dealing with things as they show themselves in human experience, that is, to dealing with phenomena.

To start with, permit me to reiterate yet once more my insistence (following Socrates) on the necessity of keeping science and philosophy unmixed since science and philosophy deal with radically distinct questions.

Regrettably my conjecture proved true. There is not much congruity between Rees' approach and mine. To obtain "the enlightenment that scientists seek" scientists must learn to leave alone questions that science cannot answer. Wisdom is the fruit of neither much learning, nor of much searching into things outside the mind. I resist a temptation to take up yet once more the distinction between knowledge and understanding. Let this suffice for now.

D. R. Khashaba

December 8, 32017

XIII

WHAT IS INTELLIGENCE?

It is notorious that as soon as scientists step outside the special language of their particular field of study, they prove to be the worst abusers of language. Thus AI and IT experts speak glibly of intelligent machines and of robots that will replace humans. Be that as it may, but let us at least think a little about the words we use.

It is a corruption of language to speak of a machine as intelligent. I know that our scientists and experts have their definitions, their technically refined definitions and criteria, but all of those definitions and criteria specify external marks that cannot reveal the essence of what we are speaking about. And the more sophisticated and intricate the definitions are, the more distant they are from the true nature, the inner

nature, of the thing defined. True, scientists and technologists have no use for the subject and subjectivity, but that does not justify their applying terms proper to the subject and subjectivity where there is no subject and no subjectivity.

The understanding of a thing, I will not say comes from, but is none other than the light that shines from the self-evidence of what we speak about. Understanding is a live experience. You understand when you have no need for definition or explanation or proof.

I repeat: it is a corruption of language to speak of a machine as intelligent because the first mark of intelligence is spontaneity, and I find ‘spontaneity’ here more telling than ‘autonomy’. Our intelligence is spontaneity; our free will is spontaneity; our intelligence, our creativity, and our freedom are one and the same thing.

When I speak of intelligence in a human being or in any sensate being, I am not referring to the intelligence of an Einstein or of an Alan Turing, but of the intelligence of my granddaughter’s cats, each of which has a marked character and temper and caprices of

her own and does what she does because — because of no because, but just that it suits her to do it.

Lessing said: “*Kein Mensch muss müssen*”. In four little words he put his finger on the holy of holies of humanity, or rather of all life. Had Descartes had a pet cat he would not have committed the absurdity of maintaining that animals are automata.

The essence of life is intelligence and spontaneity. All life is intelligent in a sense of intelligence that AI and IT experts and all the geniuses of physics and astrophysics and robot builders cannot comprehend for they seek intelligence where there is no intelligence. Where there is no life there no intelligence can be.

Dear Reader, I write in anger. Where there is anger there will be error. But if all my statements are proven to be riddled with contradiction I will still aver that in my error there is more truth that is in all the works of all Laplaces and all Turings put together.

D. R. Khashaba

December 9, 2017

XIV

DEFINITION OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy cannot be defined by its content or subject-matter like biology or chemistry or history. I have previously said that a philosopher's whole work is that philosopher's definition of philosophy. That is so as far as it goes, but it does not give us a general definition of philosophy.

The two statements I made in the lines above – that philosophy cannot be defined by its subject-matter and that each philosopher's complete work is that philosopher's definition of philosophy – are two sides of a coin. For, what is the origin, the source, the fount of a philosopher's work? If it be a genuine philosopher we are speaking about, then there is one valid

answer to the question. A genuine philosopher's whole work stems from that philosopher's puzzlements.

A philosopher is irked, tormented, by questions — ultimate questions. A philosophy-peddler who does not suffer under the stranglehold of puzzlements and doubts and who peddles secondhand philosophical merchandise in complete equanimity is a fraud.

A philosopher is a questioner. She or he questions the world, questions herself or himself, questions all received beliefs and inherited usages. Hence a philosopher is a destroyer as Nietzsche said.

There can be no textbook of philosophy as there are textbooks of physics or geology. Philosophy cannot be learned from books. Plato emphatically insisted on this. There is no way for anyone to 'become' a philosopher. No one can be a philosopher if not born a philosopher and the born philosopher 'becomes' a philosopher by giving way to one's questionings: in other words, the only way to 'become' a philosopher is to philosophize.

Philosophers write books. What do we get from reading books written by philosophers? A philosopher who presumes to give 'truths' or 'knowledge' in her or

his book is gravely deluded. The only good you get from reading a philosophy book is to be infected by the philosopher's puzzlements and questionings and go on to wrestle with the questionings that set the philosopher philosophizing in the first place, impelling you to philosophize for yourself.

To be well-read in philosophy is no guarantee that you become a philosopher. Reading one book of philosophy may initiate you to philosophy while reading a whole library of philosophy books may leave you with what Socrates called the worst ignorance, thinking that you know while you know not.

Dear Reader, these are stray thoughts strewn haphazardly without order or forethought. If they annoy you, I apologize; if they set you puzzling, I will have been well rewarded.

D. R. Khashaba

December 21, 2017

XV

NEUROLOGY AND THE MIND

Neurologists are under a very serious illusion. They think that neurology studies the mind or at any rate can lead them to understanding the mind. The mind cannot be the object of any science for the very simple reason that the essence of the mind is subjectivity while the first principle of all science is objectivity. Not even philosophers can study the mind. This sounds like a paradox but when we consider it more closely it appears to be more like a truism. Philosophers study the works of the mind and the workings of the mind. But the mind is the active principle behind all that, which is an ultimate mystery like the mystery of Being (i.e., ultimate Reality). When I think, when I am

moved emotionally, when I experience joy or grief, I am conscious of the works and the workings of my mind but my mind itself is a principle above and beyond all that: my mind is the reality that breeds all the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that philosophy and psychology explore.

A while ago I likened the mystery of the mind to the mystery of Being, but something is wrong with that statement. I would rather say that the mystery of the mind and the mystery of Being are not two but one. Being, Mind, Life are, like the Trinity of Christian theology, one in three and three in one. Indeed the Christian Trinity could be seen as a fine allegory of ultimate Reality that has been badly mangled by the gross interpretations of clever but narrow and shallow intellects.

Incidentally, psychologists in thinking that their branch of study is enhanced by adopting the methods and techniques and, more seriously, the approach of science, are deluded. The more of a science psychology becomes the farther it is removed from the living reality of the *psuchê* (psyche) and the more radically it is denied insight into the inner reality of a human being.

Worthy neurologists, your business is with the brain. Keep at it. That will win you good scientific knowledge; but if you think it will lead you to the mind, you are grossly deluded.

D. R. Khashaba

December 28, 2017

XVI

LIMITS OF EPISTEMOLGY

Epistemology is a misnomer. It is not a *logos* (science, theory) of Knowledge but of the paraphernalia of Knowledge. Knowledge herself is a goddess that does not admit humans to her holy of holies. Nothing can explain how we know anything, how we understand, how we are conscious, how we have a mind: all of that is one and the same mystery, which in turn is one with the ultimate mystery of Reality.

The academic discipline of Epistemology is, strictly speaking, a science since its subject matter is the actual or potential objective products of knowledge and the actual or potential instances of acquiring knowledge. It has numerous branches, each branch including several sub-disciplines. Scholarly work in

this field will continue indefinitely since its subject matter can never be exhausted. All of that is a good, valuable addition to our treasury of *mathemata*, but it can never so much as approach the core of the mystery of knowledge because that is one with the mystery of the mind, which in turn is one with the ultimate mystery of Reality. (I will not apologize for saying it over and over again.)

Plato permitted himself several ventures into the theory of knowing. In the *Meno* and the *Phaedrus* he initiated three such ventures. (1) He suggested defining knowledge as true opinion accompanied by a rational account (*logos*). In the *Theaetetus* this same definition was considered and found unsatisfactory. (2) He introduced the method of hypotheses which was further developed in the *Phaedo*. Its application in the ‘final argument’ for the immortality of the soul was confessed, along with the other arguments, to be non-conclusive. Moreover in the *Republic* (533c) we are told that the hypotheses underlying any philosophical statement must be demolished by dialectic. (3) In *Phaedrus*, 264-266 he outlined the method of collection and division. He experimented with this method in the late dialogues, *Sophist*, *Statesman*. *Philebus*, modifying

the method as he went on; in the *Philebus* it is no longer recognizable as the method described in the *Phaedrus*. Clearly all of this is far removed from the insight into the mystery of *epistêmê* shown in winged passages in the *Phaedo* (79d), the *Symposium* (210e-212a), and that oracular gem in *Republic* (490a-b). The Divided Line in the *Republic* (509d-511e) ranges the planes of cognition, ascending from sensuous perception to philosophical understanding. — When it comes to definite doctrines, determinate theories, we find Plato revising himself, contradicting himself, what he affirms in a given context he rejects in another context, to the delight of erudite scholars who revel in discovering such contradictions and inconsistencies.

All of the above-noted thought-sallies of Plato were adventures on the outskirts of knowledge, but Plato was not deluded into thinking that he had an answer to the question What is knowledge? In the same dialogue, the *Meno*, where he was proposing the definition of knowledge as true opinion accompanied by a *logos* and advancing the method of hypotheses, in that same dialogue he introduced the so-called doctrine of *anamnêsis*, acknowledging that knowledge is a mystery beyond our ken.

ANNEX – a fragment

The mystifying *onar anti oneiratos* (dream for a dream') in *Theaetatus* 201d-202c, though Socrates presents it as an oddity, is amenable to a Platonic interpretation amounting to this: Every explanation is composed of unexplained elements; all reasoning rests on unreasoned grounds; when we come to explain those unexplained grounds we advance fresh 'given' stepping stones. The building blocks of all *epistêmê* have to be elements taken in good faith. The premises of the Aristotelian syllogism are, strictly speaking, *dogmata*. In the method of hypotheses introduced by Plato in the *Meno* and further developed in the *Phaedo* the ground hypothesis must not be questioned; when questioned it has to be grounded on a more basic hypothesis taken in good faith. All of this is strictly in harmony with (1) the Socratic elenchus where the Form examined remains undefined, finally intelligible in its own self-evidence in the intelligence that gave it birth in the first place; (2) Plato's insistence in the *Republic* that the grounds of any philosophical statement be destroyed by dialectic (*Republic*, 533c); (3) Socra-

tes' resorting – when asked to elucidate the Form of the Good – to the simile of the sun. All of this is part and parcel of the Socratic principle of philosophical ignorance — the wisest among humans is he who, like Socrates, understands that he knows nothing. All knowledge, human knowledge in its entirety, is a cob-web woven of the substance of dreams. The only understanding that is not vain conceit is that indicated by the Delphic oracle: *gnôthi seauton*.

D. R. Khashaba

January 11, 2018

XVII

UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

**“The more I think about language,
the more it amazes me that people
ever understand each other.” Gödel**

THE MORAL SPHERE

The phrase ‘understanding others’ can be taken in either of two distinct senses: (1) the moral sense; (2) the semantic or epistemic sense.

In the moral sphere ‘understanding others’ relates to the aptitude of human individuals to appreciate the feelings, motives, aims, and interests of their fellow humans. All normal, wholesome human individuals

have a measure of this faculty. Many species of non-human animals show empathy with other members of their own species and sometimes even with members of other species.

No aggregation of humans – family, tribe, society, etc. – can function and survive without a minimal measure of fellow-understanding. Individuals however differ widely in their gift of understanding others. Practically all tension and strife within human groups – families, societies, countries, and even between one country and another – are fuelled by failure of understanding the other.

Persons endowed with a generous share of this gift may, outwardly, be unfortunate; they may be fated to give more than they receive; but inwardly they are abundantly rich, even their sorrows are precious.

When we hear about cruelties and atrocities committed by deformed and depraved characters – rape and slaughter and torture – we, forgetting ourselves, tend to feel that such characters deserve the severest of penalties but in fact they have their punishment in the very deed, for inwardly they are putrid and miserable. Of course society has to curb their evil

to protect its members, but no punishment imposed on them can equal the death-in-life they bring upon themselves. Oscar Wilde presented an apt parable in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

THE EPISTEMIC SPHERE

Coming to the epistemic sphere, let me start by making a shockingly paradoxical assertion. Strictly speaking, no one ever can understand another one. The phrase ‘understanding others’ which in the moral sphere can be given a meaningful and vital sense, in the epistemic sphere is strictly nonsensical. The understanding is not a neutral vacant receptacle into which ready-made meanings can be fed from the outside as a warehouse receives ready-made products from the outside. Locke’s basic error – which was to breed much nonsense when the Empiricists naively took it literally, was to assume that the mind passively received what was imported into it from outside. The apt metaphor for the mind is not the warehouse nor the blank slate, but the living body which processes what it receives from the outside and fashions it and integrates it into its own organs and activities.

Strictly, the mind does not understand the other but understands its own interpretation of what it gets from the other. This is true on all levels of interaction between the sensate individual and the individual's surroundings. What we take to be simple perception is an actively fashioned interpretation of the dumb sensuous inflow. On all levels all understanding is active, creative interpretation.

Apart from empty formalities and trivial sayings that are spoken almost unconsciously, every sentence issues from the speaker's subjective world, drenched in associations and emotive hues, trailing undertones and overtones of its own; it is received in a different subjective world to be clothed in different associations and overtones and undertones. 'To understand the other' is a fiction, an empty shell. We do not, we cannot, understand what is spoken to us. What emerges in our understanding is our interpretation of what is spoken to us. Hence the misunderstandings and failures to understand when the subjective worlds of speaker and auditor are wide apart.

Moreover, language, any language, is basically a skeletal system of generalities. For every individual

and for every group of people the skeleton is fleshed out by living experience. But the words of any living language have to remain fluid to fit the nuances and peculiarities of concrete instances, no two of which are ever perfectly identical. Hence Leibniz' dream of a 'universal characteristic' remains an unattainable dream. Its putative realization in the system of Symbolic Logic, like its predecessor the system of numbers, gains universality and fixity at the cost of barrenness. When it borrows actual content from outside the formal system the outcome is necessarily an approximation. Scientists generally slur this truth but two great twentieth-century thinkers saw it clearly. Wittgenstein concluded that Logic is empty, "says nothing", and Einstein insightfully said: "As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain, as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality.

Marginally, in the epigraph above, probably what Gödel, being a mathematician, found puzzling was the necessary fluidity and ambiguity of language.

D. R. Khashaba

January 15, 2018

XVIII

WHY PHILOSOPHERS DIFFER

Why is it that philosophy, unlike science, does not have a commonly agreed body of thought or doctrine to show for its continued efforts over some twenty-six centuries?

In my view the answer is quite simple: philosophy is not required to vie with science in yielding positive knowledge about the objective world, nor is it required to vie with mathematics in attaining demonstrable propositions. Unfortunately philosophers themselves have not been generally clear on this in their own minds. The failure of philosophers to grasp and acknowledge this is responsible for much muddled thinking and for

the ignominy that has been the near-universal fate of philosophy.

Philosophy and science are two distinctly separate activities relating to two radically different realms of being. To underline and emphasize this distinction I draw a corresponding radical distinction between knowledge, which I assign totally to science, and understanding, which solely and totally pertains to philosophy.

Let me give an illustration. Seed laid in moist soil germinates, sprouts, grows, yields fruit. Let us clear our minds of all that we have learned about this process. Let us imagine humans with no inherited knowledge whatsoever, imagine them observing this miracle for the first time. There is no necessary connection between one stage of this process and the next. It is all just completely separate happenings, we cannot even justifiably say ‘following one another’. Ask Hume. It is all a mystery, or better said, a number of disparate mysteries. Then the mind of a genius among humans produces the idea ‘growth’ and lo! the unrelated mysteries fall to-

gether to form an intelligible whole. This is understanding.

Then people learn to plant seeds and in time there grows the body of knowledge we have today in botany books and the inherited know-how of agriculturists. We fancy that this body of knowledge gives us understanding of the mystery. The most exhaustive account of the observed happenings does not make us understand how and why a seed becomes a tree bearing fruit. For us, drowned in knowledge, this is difficult to grasp. The idea ‘growth’ also does not explain the mystery but it gives us the peace of being possessed of an intrinsically coherent whole — permit me to say, a metaphysical whole.

The ‘Laws of Nature’ formulated by scientists are generalizations of observed regularities in the natural phenomena. They do not explain those phenomena even though scientists in general commonly claim that they do. We need to realize that science neither can nor is required to explain or make us understand happenings in nature. The loose use of the terms ‘explain’ and ‘under-

stand’ makes this important point difficult to grasp but it is necessary that we be clear about it.

On all levels all understanding is a creation of the human mind, from simple perception to metaphysical insight. “The mind is its own place, and in itself” creates meanings, values, realities, intelligible worlds. Milton’s words extend farther, higher, deeper than he intended.

A philosopher does not reach her or his position by reasoning but the travail of wrestling with the philosopher’s own inner reality is rewarded with insights that, in Plato’s words “suddenly, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself” (Epistle VII, 341c-d, tr. Glenn R. Morrow). The philosopher gathers the insights as a lover gathers roses in a bouquet for the beloved. The unity of a philosopher’s thought is not primarily rational or logical but aesthetic, like the unity of a fine mosaic.

What is a philosopher’s valuable and durable contribution to the common treasury of human culture? Not a theory, not a doctrine, and decid-

edly not positive knowledge about the world. A philosopher, in wrestling with the mysteries of Life and Being, continuing the creative work of the mind, creates magic garbs of thought that lend character and meaning to the neutral stuff of life and the world, thus rendering that stuff intelligible. A particular philosopher's special collection of such creative notions constitutes that philosopher's universe of discourse, which becomes part of the cultural heritage of humanity. In *Plato's Universe of Discourse* I tried to identify Plato's collection of such creative notions.

Philosophers are creators of special universes of discourse. When we attempt to reconcile two different philosophies, each expressing its proper universe of discourse, the outcome is more likely to be a confused jumble than a meaningful reconciliation. Each universe of discourse is unique, standing in its own light.

A philosopher's universe of discourse, constituting her or his *Weltanschauung* is whole and unique. To assess it or interpret it in terms of a

different philosopher's universe of discourse produces an incoherent muddle.

Hitherto philosophers have tended to adopt the absurd stance of assuming that there can only be one 'true' philosophy, all the others being at best approximations, failed exertions to reach the one 'true philosophy'. So long as this attitude ruled, and it still mainly rules, if not openly and explicitly then as a thinly veiled assumption — so long as that attitude ruled, philosophy was understandably open to mockery and ridicule. And that attitude will inevitably rule so long as it is held that philosophy, mimicking science, aims at attaining 'true knowledge'. Unless we realize and are convinced that we are all equally ignorant, and that all ultimate questions relate to ultimate mysteries that will always be beyond our ken — unless and until we see that clearly, we shall continue to dwell in the Cave of Plato's Allegory.

We have no 'true knowledge' of the world: this is so without qualification. In science the most up-to-date 'explanatory theory' that 'saves the appearances' is maintained until we have a

better representation, but it is all fiction from beginning to end.

A commonly agreed body of philosophic thought would have nothing to do with philosophy; it would amount to the death of philosophy. When philosophy is not the wrestling of a human mind with the unknown and unknowable it ceases to be philosophy; it turns into dogmatic superstition. To philosophize the philosopher must be fully aware that she or he knows nothing and can never know anything. All our boasted ‘knowledge’ is tinsel and shadow. When the condition of knowing nothing, confessing that one knows nothing, and resigning to the conviction that one can never know anything — when that condition is fulfilled, then one’s philosophizing would be a daring challenge to the unknown and unknowable. The philosopher confronts the unknown and unknowable ultimate realities saying: Be damned! I will create my own understandable world.

Every philosopher creates her or his more or less consistent, more or less intelligible reality.

Every philosopher creates her or his understandable world for herself or himself in the first place, to give herself or himself respite from the irksome sense of being plunged in an understandable world, but thereafter everybody is welcome to roam that private world and participate in the peace it affords.

Do philosophers then deceive themselves and live in a big lie? Put it that way if you wish, but when the lie is known for a lie it loses its sting.

Dear Reader, if you have the stamina to go through what follows, you will find nothing but sheer madness, but it is the madness that is the sum of wisdom.

The ultimate mysteries of Being, Mind, Life, Becoming can never be solved, resolved, or explained. Science cannot approach these mysteries since they cannot be objectified so as to make them amenable to measurement and empirical experimentation. Nor can philosophers explain these ultimate mysteries. Yet philosophers create intelligible myths in terms of which the world is coherently portrayed — I am trying to speak the

ineffable: this is where mystics seek refuge in Unreason, Nothingness, Cloud of Unknowing — let me say: in terms of which we are enabled to make our peace with the mystery. For where do we meet face to face with the mysteries of Being, Mind, Life, Becoming? It is in our own internal reality. Hence we mythologize to give expression to our insight into our own internal reality. Therefore I insist that the way to understanding ourselves and understanding reality is the realization and the confession of our ignorance. Philosophers have to confess and to declare that their mythical representation of our own internal reality does not give knowledge, nor does it offer truth.

Parmenides said: *tauto gar esti noein te kai einai*, “it is one and the same thing to be intelligible and to be”; again we might put it this way: “intelligence and reality are one and the same”. This is the credo of all genuine philosophy, from, I venture to say, Heraclitus to Plato through Spinoza to Schopenhauer. But I find fault with philosophers when they affirm that this is true of the actual world. Philosophers legislate for them-

selves; they have no competence to legislate for Reality outside the human mind. The philosopher's reality is in the mind, or better said, is the mind. Of all philosophers hitherto (apart from mystics and the ancient sages of China and India) only Plato saw this clearly and affirmed it explicitly. At the apex of the philosophical ascent, the end of the philosophical travail, Plato finds the Form of the Good about which we can only speak in myth and parable.

The one Reality that we know immediately and indubitably is our subjective inner reality. All the rest is flux, shadow, transient phenomena. That is why I insist on affirming the principle of philosophical ignorance; confessing our ignorance is the gateway to, not knowledge, but understanding — understanding of what? — of the one reality we are aware of, our inner reality represented in intrinsically coherent myths.

That is why, dear Reader, philosophers must, should, differ, while intimating their insights into the one Reality in various prophetic dreams, like poets, for philosophers are indeed poets.

Dear Reader, I know that what I have been saying in this essay is hard to absorb, since I am condensing in these few lines what I have been expounding in numerous books and essays throughout more than two decades.

D. R. Khashaba

January 24, 2018

XIX

KNOWING AND UNDERSTANDING

Throughout my writings I have stressed the need for a radical distinction between knowledge and understanding, a distinction which, I maintain, is clearly made and emphasized by Plato.

In common usage the terms ‘know’ and ‘understand’ overlap and are often used interchangeably. For Empiricists there can be no such distinction since for them all cognition is objective and of the objective while understanding is essentially subjective. Hence for all who speak of a metaphysical reality or a metaphysical plane of being the distinction is crucial even if it is not reflected in their terminology. After all, it is notorious that Plato was the worst offender against terminological uniformity. The problem is further

complicated by Kant's 'concepts of the understanding' which correspond to the Platonic Forms that confer intelligibility to the dumb data of experience. The nearest thing in Kant to the realm of understanding (as in the terminology I adopt) are the Ideals of Pure Reason.

It occurred to me to further clarify that distinction – primarily in my own mind – by running through some specific examples.

What do I know? In Plato's dialogues whenever there is question about someone having or not having knowledge of this or that it is implied that he could only have that knowledge (1) if he had found out for himself, or (2) if he was taught by another. I think that this exhaustively covers the sources of knowledge: we have knowledge (1) from personal experience, and (2) we have reported knowledge.

I know that the sun comes up every morning and goes down at the end of the day. I have seen this happening day after day. Then I was taught that it is not the sun that journeys daily from one horizon to the other, but it is the earth that rotates facing the sun in one region of the globe after another. Empiricists say

that this ‘explains’ the sun’s apparent movement. Does it? Does it make me understand why the earth rotates? Early astronomers, whether they adopted a heliocentric or a geocentric theory, only described what happens. They did not say or know why the earth rotates or why it revolves around the sun. Newton ascribed the movements of the earth and the other planets to gravity but confessed he had no idea what gravity was. Einstein ascribed these movements to the curvature of space but no one can even imagine that curvature. That is true of all scientific knowledge. It enables us to calculate, to anticipate, to manipulate natural phenomena but does not explain, does not make us understand, anything. That is knowledge: knowledge is that and nothing but that.

What about understanding? Let me first state my position bluntly. All understanding is subjective; in other words, all understanding is cooked in the mind by the mind. When a stranger helps my ninety-year-old bones and near-blind eyes to cross the street, I understand that as an act of kindness, not as the operation of glands and neurons in the stranger. When I read: “Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind / I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom / But

Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb” (Wordsworth) — when I read these words I understand the pathos, the joy wrapped in the pang of grief, the tender love for the departed; I understand the experience that outflowed into the words because my mind infuses the words with feelings emanating from experiences similar to the poet’s experience.

Thus understanding, being an outpouring by the mind of meaningfulness and intelligibility on what it receives has the sufficiency of its self-evidence immediacy in subjective intelligence. Hence the outcome of genuine philosophical creativity, like inspired poetry, needs no exterior evidence or demonstration and is not attained through inferential reasoning but is the gift of insight into the reality of the philosopher’s own mind.

D. R. Khashaba

February 2, 2018

XX

BRAIN AND MIND

Neurologists and neuroscientists are every now and then announcing some new advance or discovery in their field of study. As far as it goes that is all right and all for the good. But underneath the legitimate pride and jubilation there is always the hardly veiled promise that we are on the verge of explaining the mind away, of doing away with this trouble-maker that refuses to submit to the scientific methods of examination and verification.

Let me first bluntly state, for the nth time, my conviction. Even when we have amply shown that all thought, all emotion, all feeling, down to the minutest flicker of the mind, is bedded in the brain and is shown to take its rise in and from the brain, even then we will not have done away with the mystery of the mind. Again, even when we make an intelligent machine that is self-conscious, even when we make a robot that has emotions and can speak of its own ego — even then we cannot say that we have understood the mystery of the mind.

To my mind, all being is two-sided, bidimensional, subject and object at once, eternal noumenon and evanescent phenomenon. We cannot be immediately aware of both subject and object at once except in one place, within ourselves. But I cannot conceive anything existing as sheer object. All things outside ourselves can only be known to us as objects, but I find an object existing all by itself to be unintelligible: as essentially transient, evanescent, it cannot support itself. Of course I cannot imagine how mind is related to a stone, but my mind tells me that without mind a stone cannot exist. Following Spinoza, we may see the world, all nature, as *natura naturata* inseparable of *natura naturans*. Following Berkeley, we may see all things as complexes of qualities in the universal Mind (God).

You might say, what is the point of all this? If we can only know all things, including ourselves, as objects objectively studied by the methods of science, why bother about the unknowable subject. My brief answer is that all our values, all that we treasure, all that constitutes our specifically human character, is in the subjective realm: even all science has no abode, no fount, other than the mind. Science studies all objects objectively, but science itself, as an intelligent activity,

has no place but the mind: physics, mathematics, biology, even proud IT, where would all that be without the human mind?

When we forget about the mind while immersed in the gifts of the mind – science and the conveniences and amenities of our material civilization – we are rewarded with the ailments of our present day: consumerism, cut-throat rivalry, greed, animosity, overproduction coupled with poverty and hunger within and without. I apologize to the reader for this gloomy ending which I tried to put in as few words as possible.

D. R. Khashaba

February 10, 2018

XXI

GOD AND I

God and I have had a lifelong unstable and uneven relationship. More than once I have described my philosophy as a continued wrestling with God, though along its extended course God has not remained the same but has undergone a radical transformation.

As a child I was taught that the world has been made by a mighty being, all-knowing and all-powerful. The term ‘created’ was introduced at a later stage along with a mass of dogmatic teachings originating, as I in time learned, from a book referred to collectively (in Arabic) as the Holy Book although it consists of

two groups of assorted books – the Old Testament and the New Testament – differing widely in content and tone. Though, repelled by a number of abhorrent tales especially in the Old Testament, I shed off most of the dogmatic teachings in my early teens, the concept of a mighty being out there who created the world and continues to oversee and to rule all things — this concept hanged on somewhat longer.

When I began to philosophize – before I knew there was such a thing as philosophy – two questions ignited the *aporia*, the painful unrest that is the origin of all philosophy, occupying my mind one following the other. The first question was moral. World War II was raging with the news of killing and destruction pouring in day and night. I found it puzzling that humans were so stupid as not to know that peace and goodwill would bring them gains far exceeding anything they can obtain by slaughtering one another.

The second question was metaphysical. How did this world come about? How could there be anything at all? Further, how could anything that is not perfect, that does not have the self-sufficiency of perfect being, be? As soon as the question presented itself to my

mind in this form, the concept of a God outside the world, creating the world out of nothing, was seen to be evidently absurd, for the being of God was itself problematic, as problematic as the being of any particular thing in the world.

Somehow I formed for myself the view that the origin of all being, the ultimately real, must be good and intelligent. What was the nature of that ultimate Reality? When I posed the question to myself in that form I was convinced that the origin of all things must be Will. Will, I saw, is of its own nature purposive. Will is thus affirmative of being. is good, is Love. That good and intelligent Will displaced the God of my childhood.

I had reached that far before I began to read philosophy. As far as I can remember my earliest philosophy schooling was in the Encyclopedia Britannica Eleventh Edition. I read the articles about the major philosophers and about the main philosophy departments and themes. Then, as I remember, I discovered Plato and was captivated. Also at a very early stage (late teens to early twenties) I had the good fortune of reading Spinoza's *Ethics*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

son, Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* (all in English). Spinoza's Pantheism fitted well with the convictions I came with.

In Plato's early dialogues I found the answer, in principle, to the moral question. I saw that Socrates found that what constituted our specific character as human beings was that our action was governed by ideas, ideals, purposes, formed in and by the mind. Our good is in the wholesomeness of our mind (soul, *nous*, *psuchê*) and our misery is in the maiming and corruption of our mind. The early and middle dialogues also gave me my epistemology. All knowledge and all understanding come from the ideas born in and by the mind.

In the *Republic* I found everything. In the Form of the Good I found confirmation for my notion of ultimate Reality as intelligent and good and creative. But I also learned that while that is the vision of Reality that satisfies our mind, there are two most important reservations. (1) That vision and the insight that gives birth to that vision cannot be captured in any formulation of language or thought and that is why any such formulation can be nothing but a myth intimating the

insight. The various conceptions of ultimate Reality produced by different philosophers can be nothing but myths intimating the various philosophers' vision of Reality. (2) We find our vision of Reality in our mind and nowhere but in our mind. Our vision of Reality is nothing but our insight into our own inner reality.

Where does that leave God? We have no access to any reality other than our own inner reality. No empirical experience and no reasoning can give us access to any reality other than our own reality. Therefore I do not say that my vision of ultimate Reality is true of the actual world nor do I say that it is a true representation of God. If my vision of ultimate Reality is equated with my vision of God, then that God is nowhere but in my mind.

Hence I say that all philosophers, with the sole exception of Plato, are deluded when they maintain that their visions are true of the actual world. What is the use of philosophy then? Our struggling with the insistent, persistent questionings about the All and the Whole is what gives us our wholeness and integrity. Our wrestling with the idea of God is what reveals to us the god within us.

**I wrestled for a lifetime with God to find at last
that the only God I know of certainly and lucidly is the
God I create for myself within myself.**

D. R. Khashaba

February 12, 2018

XXII

THE HUBRIS OF SCIENCE

Scientists are deservedly proud of their work. All the benefits and comforts of our present-day material civilization (as distinct from culture) are the gift of the astounding achievements of science during the past four centuries and of the science-supported technologies. None but a fool will gainsay this. But scientists have turned their legitimate pride into arrogance and blameworthy conceit.

Before proceeding further a cautionary word is needed. Individual scientists like individuals in any walk of life display the normal gamut from the humble to the haughty. (See “Science and Spirituality” further below for another corrective.) The hubris I speak of is not personal but institutional and is exhibited in two

trends. (1) Scientists claim that advances in science explain and give us understanding of the mysteries of nature and the secrets of the universe'. (2) Scientists explicitly or implicitly expect that eventually science will unfold the ultimate mystery of the origin of everything. Against (1) I hold that scientists are misusing the words 'explain' and 'understand'. Against (2) I am convinced that the mystery of the Ultimate Origin will always remain a mystery.

To show that I am not misrepresenting the claims and expectations of scientists I reproduce the banners crowning a news article published by the *Independent* two days ago:

"Scientists see the very beginning of stars for the first time, in breakthrough that could unlock the mysteries of the universe

"The research could break open the secrets of dark matter, and how the galaxy that surrounds us formed"

What do I mean when I say that scientists misuse the words 'explain' and 'understand'? I mean that science can show how things have come about but that does not give us understanding. In the seventeenth

century Descartes reduced all things to two completely separate substances: thought and extended body; he maintained that in the extended body there is no force or motive power. That position despite the insurmountable theoretical difficulties involved in it, provides the working scheme of empirical science. Science observes, measures, experiments with, the objectively given surface of things. That is what Kant called phenomena and limited empirical science to. Newton supposed there is a force in bodies which he called gravity but confessed he had no idea what it could be. Hume said we observe one state of affairs then another state of affairs but have no ground for connecting the two states of affairs together. Bertrand Russell pronounced the long and the short of it: science has no use or need for the notion of cause; the ‘laws of nature’ are all we need. What are the laws of nature? They are summarized descriptions of observed regularities in nature; they are always provisional approximations. Goodbye to the dream of Laplace. Wittgenstein stated boldly:

“The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenome-

na” (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.371, tr. Pears and McGuinness).

However comprehensive and however detailed an account of an objectively observed state of affairs may be, it cannot give us understanding: to us the world will always be a pageant of passing shadows. To my mind, understanding is only to be found in the immediacy of our subjective reality. There is a sense in which understanding one’s self is the rarest of things, but in general we understand motives, we understand the spontaneous acts of free will. Our free will, rather than being the dark mystery it is commonly supposed to be, is truly our model of the intelligible: the notion of natural causation is a projection into nature of our experience of free, purposive activity. When we see one person helping another at a considerable sacrifice for himself, we understand that as an act of kindness.

So much for the question of understanding. I will deal very briefly with the question of the ultimate origin of all things. The lines I reproduced above from the *Independent* speak of seeing “the very beginning of stars” and of unlocking “the mysteries of the universe”. Supposing that, Big Bang or no Big Bang, we

see the universe at its birth, there must have been something there in the first place to ‘give birth’, so we have the eternal child’s unanswerable “And who made God?” Or supposing we say there was nothing to start with and the primordial Nothingness out of nothing brought about all things. What an understandable revelation! We have to face it: neither empirical science nor pure reason can “unlock” the riddle of the being of Being. That was what Kant saw clearly and stated unequivocally even though he, unable to free himself from the dogmatic religious inculcation of his childhood, found in Practical Reason a subterfuge for affirming the existence of God and the immortality of the soul — the soul which he vainly tried to capture in his doctrine of the transcendent unity of apperception. I do not want to lengthen this essay any further; suffice it to refer the reader to “Stephen Hawking’s Bad Metaphysics”.

D. R. Khashaba

March 2, 2018

XXIII

MY PROBLEM WITH TRUTH

Next to the term ‘reality’ no other has given me so much trouble and exposed me to such grave misunderstanding as the term ‘truth’. The statement “Philosophy seeks truth” sounds as much of a truism as “On Earth day is followed by night”. Yet I have been in all my writings emphatically asserting that philosophy has nothing to do with truth. Clearly there is something here calling for explanation.

Why have I found it worthwhile, rather necessary, to face all the trouble and misunderstanding caused by my insistence on distancing philosophy from truth? I found that necessary because the seemingly innocuous statement that “philosophy

seeks truth” carries within it the delusive view that philosophy aims at attaining true knowledge about the objective world. This view is doubly pernicious because many or rather most philosophers embraced that delusive view and it is that false view and false expectation that have brought upon philosophy the ridicule of the Empiricists and the Positivists. Only Socrates-Plato and Kant have been completely free of that illusion.

How then shall we express the sound core that wins such immediate and wide acceptance for the statement that philosophy seeks truth? Without digressing into a lengthy semantic explanation I would suggest that we would give both philosophy and truth their due when we say that philosophy seeks understanding.

D. R. Khashaba

March 9, 2018

XXIV

GOODBYE STEPHEN HAWKING

Stephen Hawking is dead. His life was evidence incarnate of the mastery of the spirit over the body.

Two years ago, on March 13, 2016, I finished a paper commenting on Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, under the title "Stephen Hawking's Bad Metaphysics". As is evident from the title the paper targeted certain ramblings of Hawking's outside the sphere of science.

About Hawking's contributions to science there will be no dearth of informed comment and applause and in any case that is a field which I am not equipped to approach.

In my paper I applauded Hawking's insightful delineation of the nature of scientific theory. I believe that scientists and philosophers will greatly benefit by pondering what Hawking authoritatively, lucidly, and precisely explains there.

I would have liked to quote the passage I alluded to in full, but it is too long to reproduce here. Anyhow, it is there in the first chapter of *A Brief History of Time*. Suffice it to quote the following paragraph. Let this be my tribute to a wonderful man.

“Any physical theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it. No matter how many times the results of experiments agree with some theory, you can never be sure that the next time the result will not contradict the theory. On the other hand, you can disprove a theory by finding even a single observation that disagrees with the predictions of the theory. As philosopher of science Karl Popper has emphasized, a good theory is characterized by the fact that it makes a number of predictions that could in principle be disproved or falsified by observation. Each time new experiments are ob-

served to agree with the predictions the theory survives, and our confidence in it is increased; but if ever a new observation is found to disagree, we have to abandon or modify the theory.”

D. R. Khashaba

March 14, 2018

XXV

PRINCIPLE OF INTELLIGIBILITY

(A version of this paper, revised and augmented, has been incorporated in Chapter Nine of *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*, 2018. Here it has received further revision and amendment.)

My first book, *Let Us Philosophize* (1998, 2008), was divided into three parts, Book One: Intelligibility, Book Two: Reality, Book Three: Integrity. That covered my philosophy as a whole: epistemology, ontology, axiology. For some time I have been intending to write an essay explaining what I mean by the Principle of Intelligibility. As I sat down to begin working on this essay it occurred to me that I should follow it with two essays on Reality and Integrity, which I hope to do

fairly soon. (See Part Three of *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*.)

With the birth of philosophy (as distinct from the wisdom of the oriental sages) the human mind threw down the gauntlet to the universe demanding that it be intelligible. That was the challenge issued to the World by Thales and his Milesian successors. The human mind no longer accepted to yield slavishly to the unknown powers behind the happenings of the natural world. The primitive mind sought to appease and/or if possible sway the gods behind thunder and rain and fire, behind birth and death. The Hellenic thinker knew full well that the powers of nature could crush him; that was as nothing to him; he demanded to know what those powers are and how they function. When Thales said that all things were full of gods that was not a polytheistic dogma; it was a rational conviction that there was a reason for the being or becoming of everything; that there was motive power in all that happens. That was the insight that Plato, some two centuries later, encapsulated in the assertion that everything that is in any sense real is at bottom nothing but *dunamis*, power, energy (*Sophist* 247e). That – the insight of Thales and the formulation of Plato – is far

in advance of the position of our present-day ‘materialists’ (under whatever newfangled designation) who think that their ‘laws of nature’ control and move the world. (More on the ‘laws of nature’ below.)

Not long after Thales and his immediate successors we find Heraclitus speaking of the *Logos* that holds always and Parmenides who affirmed that to be intelligible and to be is the same thing (*tauto gar esti noein te kai einai*). Jumping over millennia we find Einstein, relatively quite recently, saying: “The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.” But what are we to understand by the ‘comprehensibility’ of the world? Perhaps earlier than (or contemporaneously with) the Milesian school Pythagoras noted that things (beginning with musical notes) had an amazing affinity to number. Modern science is fundamentally and basically built on this affinity. Thus in all things scientists look for their quantitative aspect. This enables them to formulate relatively constant equations that enable scientists to make predictions of happenings in nature — predictions that are always approximate (accurate within an acceptable margin of error) and always provisional (never absolutely certain). In support of this statement, especially as I claim no sci-

entific competence, I will quote words of two scientists of the highest rank of scientific genius.

Einstein said:

“As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain, as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality.”

Stephen Hawking who departed only the day before I began this essay said:

“... you have to be clear about what a scientific theory is. ... a theory is just a model of the universe, or a restricted part of it, and a set of rules that relate quantities in the model to observations that we make. It exists only in our minds and does not have any other reality (whatever that might mean). ... Any physical theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it.” (*A Brief History of Time*, first chapter)

Let this suffice for the ‘comprehensibility’ of the universe, only let us keep in mind that number is a creation of the human mind and the equations of scientists are creations of the human mind. Now, as we

jumped millennia forward from Heraclitus and Parmenides to our present day, let us jump millennia back to Plato.

The much maligned Platonic ‘theory of forms’ boils down to this: We understand nothing but what our mind clothes in forms of its own creation. This is the same insight we find in Kant who said that reason finds in nature nothing but what reason itself has put in nature (*Critique of Pure Reason*, first ed., xviii). The bare sense impressions that Locke called ‘ideas’ mean nothing, say nothing, until the mind confers on them a character born in the mind. But the ideas of the things in nature, of things outside the mind, including the human body, though they enable us to speak of things and to manipulate things yet they do not give us understanding of the inner nature of things, of the reality of things. This too was affirmed by Kant: things in nature are only known to us as phenomena. The ‘comprehensibility’ of the universe that Einstein spoke of does not take us far. The model of the universe that Hawking speaks of does not take us into the inner reality of things. All knowledge of things outside our own inner reality is nothing but a pattern, a shape, into which the mind moulds the otherwise meaningless

phenomena of the outer world, just as a lad reclining leisurely on a grassy hill shapes the sailing clouds into giraffes and elephants and swans. Wittgenstein insightfully describes as illusion the modern belief that the scientific ‘laws of nature’ explain the phenomena of nature (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.371).

In the ‘divided line’ (*Republic* 509d-511e) Plato ranges the levels of knowledge from *eikasia* (image) concerned with images to *pistis* (belief) relating to commonplace acquaintance with actual things in the natural world, through *dianoia* (thought) relating to the area of empirical knowledge, to the topmost level concerned with pure ideas and principles (the field of philosophical reflection), in the ‘divided line’ designated as *nous* or *noêsis*, but elsewhere Plato names it *phronêsis* (reason, intelligence).

Thus with the Milesian thinkers the human mind begins its long journey in quest of understanding by proclaiming its self-awarded prerogative to know the world as a whole. At a crucially important station in that heroic journey Plato declared, as stated above, that all things that are in any sense real are nothing but *dunamis*. I know of no philosopher who noted the

importance of that seminal declaration by Plato other than A. N. Whitehead. Regardless of that, philosophers have been drawing their mind-bred models of the world and of ultimate reality, visions of reality I call them. Strictly, they are that and nothing but that, mind-bred visions of reality.

[Warning to the Reader: What follows you will find truly crazed, for who dare aspire to look Reality in the face and preserve his sanity? To him we may apply Coleridge's verses: "For he on honey-dew hath fed, / And drunk the milk of Paradise."]

Well then, seeing that there is no knowledge and no understanding of Reality but the knowledge and the understanding that the mind creates for itself, I say that the mind, creating all reality, is itself the ultimate Reality. To put it somehow paradoxically, the mind in its quest of ultimate Reality, in finding its own inner reality to be the only reality and the whole of reality, brings forth Reality -- in Plato's inspired words, gives birth in Beauty (*tokos en kalôi*) to reality and intelligence. Visions of ultimate Reality are oracles in which the mind intimates its own inner reality in myth and parable. The Delphic *gnôthi sauton* is beginning and end of the mind's 'pilgrim's progress' to Reality.

And since I with Plato maintain that all reality is in essence *dunamis*, I say that the reality of the mind, or the ultimate reality that is no other than Mind, is sheer creativity. Further, the mind that is itself the ultimate Reality, I say, is not an entity that is creative and intelligent, nor even a God that is creative and intelligent, but is wholly and purely creativity. I also say that it comes to the same thing to say that ultimate reality is creative intelligence or intelligent creativity. I name it Creative Eternity. The justification of this name is given in my books and will be taken up again when I write the essay on the Principle of Creativity. (Part Three of *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*.)

In conclusion let me emphasize two things. (1) My vision of Reality is just that, a vision that gives my mind satisfaction and is one of many possible visions. If I say that ultimate Reality is Mind, it is consistent with this to say that my vision of Reality is an intimation of my own inner reality which is strictly ineffable and consequently all representations of it can be nothing but myths aspiring to speak the unspeakable. (2) My vision of Reality does not seek or claim to be applicable to, or to be true of, the actual world. On the

other hand, scientific ‘models’ of the universe are, as Kant saw, confined to phenomena.

Whitehead contrasts Plato’s *Timaeus* myth with Newton’s *Principia* in a passage that philosophers and scientists would do well to study carefully. (*Process and Reality*, p.93..)

D. R. Khashaba

March 17, 2018

XXVI

ROBOT THREAT

The *Independent* carried on March 18, 2018, an article by Robert A Johnson about the fear voiced by some eminent thinkers that “artificially intelligent robots” might annihilate humanity. I have repeatedly protested against the ascription of ‘intelligence’ or ‘reasoning’ to computers and felt gratified to sense from the headlines that Johnson was arguing against such exaggerated fears.

While reading I jotted down some notes, not commenting on the article but, let us say, thinking along with the article. I give these notes here as they were written, for what they are worth, but I have moved the note I wrote first to the bottom.

As I see it, the danger lurking in the further development of robots is twofold (but not including their revolting and wiping off humans). (1) The first risk is that we are liable to rely on robots to such an extent that the scope and the demand for human creativity would be continuously narrowed so that we find ourselves relapsing culturally to a primitive state. (2) The second risk, perhaps the greater, is that narrow-minded or egotistic ruling powers, who control the designing and programming of robots for specific purposes, may use robots so as to aggravate the evils existing in the present unjust and irrational world-order.

Whatever we may imagine robots to be capable of in the future (near or far), I believe we needlessly confuse our thinking by using the terms ‘intelligence’ and ‘reason, reasoning’ loosely. Human intelligence is creative and reasoning is a creative activity. I believe we are less likely to err when we say a bird is intelligent or that a dog reasons than when we attribute intelligence and reasoning to a machine however sophisticatedly programmed.

Early in the article we read: “... philosophy seems to be in a regular state of existential crisis.” I wrote:

Why? Because philosophers, even while they are doing good philosophical work, have mistaken their business for that of scientists and mathematicians. Briefly put, it is not the business of philosophy to answer questions but to raise questions, questions of a peculiar character. In the first place philosophical questions are and must be unanswerable. Secondly their subject is equally peculiar. A philosopher may seem, even in her or his own eyes, to be ranging in speculation throughout the infinities of time and space. In truth, the subject-matter of all philosophy is always one and the same: the exploration of the philosopher's own mind, i.e. the philosopher's own inner reality. All philosophy is summed up in the question: What am I? Kant summed up the whole business of philosophy in three questions: What can I know? What must I do? What can I hope for? This specific formulation split the one question into three to suit Kant's convictions, but even so we find that 'I' is the common fulcrum of all three questions. And why is the one question or the many questions into which it is broken up by philosophers to suit each particular philosopher's approach — why must the question/s necessarily be unanswerable? Heraclitus had the answer: it is so because the inner

reality of a human being, the *psuchê*, is unfathomable. You can take it as an infallible criterion: The more definite a philosopher's answers, a philosopher's views, are, the farther removed from genuine meta-physical thinking the philosopher is. (See "What Robots Can Do" further below.)

D. R. Khashaba

March 19, 2018

XXVII

THE WISDOM OF IGNORANCE

The wisdom in Socrates' injunction that we know our ignorance extends to a greater scope than Socrates had in mind. We human beings, even at the simple level of our animal nature, are soaked and drenched in mystery. Empirical science, not to speak of the speculations of pure reason, is fruitful when and so long as it finds itself surrounded by unanswered questions. The comfortable feeling that we know, that we understand, this or that, kills or at least numbs the mind in this or that area.

I am writing this note impromptu without forethought or preparation and every sentence I begin to write comes heavy with side-proliferations most of which I have to discard to keep the sentence managea-

ble for writer and reader. But the initial impetus that triggered the subsequent outflow was the flicker of a thought about the origin of language. Philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists, philologists, have written and will yet write tomes of learned speech without coming any nearer to a satisfactory answer to the question about the origin of language. Why so? In my opinion, this is as it has to be and as it must be. Again, why? Because the origin of language is inseparable from the ultimate mystery of Life and the mystery of Mind.

Plato sought an answer to the question: ‘how is it that we have knowledge, any knowledge?’ His wrestling with that question gave him his greatest insight intimated by the myth of Reminiscence, which is not so much a myth as a symbolic expression of the insight: when we are born we bring with us all knowledge hidden within us; it has only to be ferreted out. In my view, there is nothing more idiotic than the institution of an academic discipline named ‘philosophy of mind’ — but this results from the foul heritage of Descartes who made of thought a substance.

Nowadays the most exciting news comes from the area of astrophysics with reports of NASA's explorations; and with every physical or theoretical discovery we hear jubilant voices announcing "we are nearer to discovering", "we are closer to understanding", which is nonsense. With every new discovery the ultimate mystery slides into deeper darkness. Pope's couplet: "Nature, and Nature's Laws lay hid in Night: / God said 'Let Newton be!' and all was Light" stood the truth on its head. For two centuries physicists lived the lie of having all the answers until Einstein made them see their error. If you want to find the most knowledgeable people on Earth, go to the most backward, primitive tribe. They have no unanswered questions.

Dear Reader, I offer you these rambling thoughts because I foolishly promised to keep posting fresh blogs. If you find what I have written crazy, well, what do you expect of a demented old man whom death refuses to visit?

D. R. Khashaba

May 21, 2018

XXVIII

WHAT ROBOTS CANNOT DO

[A few days ago I posted to this blog a note titled “Robot Threat”; this note may be considered an annex to that.]

Over the past two decades I have frequently commented on the claims or expectations of there being ‘intelligent’ computers in the near or distant future. Several times I stated that I am open-minded as to the possibility that in time we may have truly intelligent computers. On those occasions when I made that concession my purpose was to emphasize one of, or both of, two considerations:

- (1) We err in attributing intelligence to computers now existing or now being planned, since the characteristic traits of an intelligent being are sub-**

jectivity and spontaneity. I maintain that a one-year-old human child beats any computer, however sophisticated, on those two counts.

(2) We err grossly when we assume that if and when we make an intelligent computer we will have understood what intelligence or consciousness is. Scientists and AI experts ignore the impassable chasm between knowing HOW something comes about – which is all that science can disclose – on the one side and understanding WHAT it is on the other side. Likewise I maintain that even if we make in the laboratory a living animal from chemical elements we would not have cracked the secret of Life. Intelligence and Life, like Being, are ultimate mysteries that no scientific knowledge can make us understand.

Those were the reservations qualifying my sometime concession that we may one day have truly intelligent computers — a concession stemming from my unwillingness to make a positive assertion on a subject in regard to which I confess complete ignorance. But it occurred to me that, without venturing into scientific or technological waters beyond my depth, I might ad-

duce grounds for denying the possibility of our ever having a truly intelligent robot. I offer the following argument for the limitation of computer sophistication for what it is worth.

I suppose in the first place that a simple computer is a tool equipped with rules for performing certain operations. A first degree of sophistication would be to equip the computer with secondary or second-order rules for applying the primary rules. The next higher degree of sophistication would be to equip it with third-order rules for applying the secondary rules for applying the primary rules. We can similarly have fourth-order rules, fifth-order rules, *ad infinitum*. Thus we can have sophistication and enhancement endlessly, but the sophistications and enhancements will always consist of rules and rules for applying the rules. Thus the computer or robot can never outstep or bypass (except in accidental error) the rules it has been equipped with. Thus the computer or robot can never match the spontaneity of a baby or a little kitten. The baby may err, may burn its finger; the little kitten may jump into a tub full of water and drown. The baby and the little kitten will err and endanger themselves because what they may do is without limit.

The computer or robot may break down or fail, but strictly speaking, will not err because what it may do is strictly limited to: (1) applying a rule; (2) failing to apply or accidentally misapplying a rule. Humans and other animals err and learn. A computer if it botches an operation that would be because something damaged or interfered with a part of its equipment (hard or soft).

D. R. Khashaba

March 27, 2018

XXIX

BLISSFUL IGNORANCE

The beginning and end of human wisdom is to know that we have our being and our life within concentric circles of ignorance.

In the dawn of human life – the life of the race and the life of every individual – we are thrown into an ocean of inchoate shapes.

Gradually we mark off a number of the inchoate shapes, give them names, thereby endowing each with a character of its own.

Gradually we note that the shapes have characteristic habits. Fire burns, flowers wither. We note that among the different forms there are regular associa-

tions. That is the extent of our empirical knowledge. Our proudest sciences go not a jot beyond that.

Gradually we note our internal life, our internal being. We note our internal ooziings and commotions. We note our internal experiences, our internal states of being: pain, pleasure, delight, grief.

By and by we wonder, we are amazed, we are puzzled. We invent fables to appease our wonder and our puzzlement. That is the extent of our metaphysical philosophizing.

We know not the essence of external things. We know not the origin of our internal thoughts and emotions and passions.

Beautiful forms, harmonious sounds, infuse in us internal peace. Yet despite all our probings, we know not what makes the beautiful beautiful.

Amity, goodwill, stirs within us sweet feelings; we know not whence or how or why.

We know not; to know that we know not that is the beginning of human wisdom.

When we fool ourselves into thinking that we know, we fall into the dungeon of the worst ignorance, the lie in the soul.

D. R. Khashaba

April 3, 2018

XXX

WOES OF TERMINOLOGY

I

I am my own worst enemy. I have been using certain terms in senses different from and often opposed to commonly accepted usages. I thought that two considerations justify my aberrant usages. (1) I thought that by clearly explaining (I shun the word ‘defining’) the sense in which I use a word I would escape being grossly misunderstood. (2) I thought it would be appreciated that every original philosophy must have its special language. Indeed I would unhesitatingly affirm that every distinct philosophy is a distinct language.

I was disappointed in my expectations. I have been having endless trouble with ‘reality’, ‘truth’, ‘knowledge’ (in two distinct usages), ‘understanding’,

and ‘monism and dualism’; leave alone the word ‘philosophy’ itself. In this paper I will review my woes with ‘knowledge’.

II

I have been expounding and advocating the profoundly crucial insights jammed together by Plato in half-a-dozen pages in the guise of a Socratic ‘autobiography’ (*Phaedo* 95e-102a). I said ‘insights’ in the plural, for that short passage, strangely overlooked by scholars, is a treasure trove of philosophical wisdom. I have dealt with its various themes and aspects repeatedly. (For a detailed examination see Part One of *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*.) Here I deal with a single theme: the radical separation of science and philosophy.

Socrates emphatically asserts that the investigation of things in nature can never give us answers to the philosophical questions about ultimate reality and ultimate origins, or about values, and purposes. In Kantian terms, the study of natural things can give us nothing but acquaintance with the empirical appearances (phenomena) of things in the objective world, including our own bodies.

In turn, questions about ultimate realities, origins, values, aims and purposes, which cannot be answered by investigation of the external world, can only be probed by contemplation and exploration of ideas engendered by the mind and to be found only in the mind. (Here I am conscious of going beyond the letter of Socrates-Plato; but I honestly believe that in doing so I am bringing out the essential Socratic insight.) Moreover, in probing the ideas in our mind, we discover that all the time we have been doing nothing but probing the reality of our mind. We discover that the only reality we know is our own inner reality, our *psuchê* or *nous*; and that is the whole business of philosophy; it can never give us objective knowledge but can only give us insights into our inner reality, insights which cannot be conveyed in any definite statement but can only be intimated in myth and parable.

To crystallize the radical Socratic separation of scientific empirical knowledge on the one hand and philosophical understanding on the other, I willingly cede the term ‘knowledge’ to science and appropriate the term ‘understanding’ to philosophy. (Here my terminology unfortunately clashes with Kant’s.) But when I say that science cannot give us understanding,

readers take me to be denying the value of scientific knowledge, when all the scientific and technological achievements we are drowned in make it plain that not even an idiot could do that. And when I say that philosophy can never give us any objective knowledge I am taken to be siding with the Positivists who say that all philosophy is total nonsense,

III

In the seventeenth century, and extending into the eighteenth, the European mind turned inwards. Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, all examined their own minds, not to philosophically probe their inner reality, as Heraclitus or Parmenides or Socrates or Plato did but to scrutinize the content, to examine their thoughts about everything, especially about the external world. That was the drive that freed the European mind from the fetters and absurdities of Scholasticism and laid the way wide open to the astounding advances of empirical science and technology since then to the present day.

Yet I have been tempted to say that the Epistemology whose foundations were laid by those philosophers is a misnomer. For the so-called Epistemology

or rather epistemologies to which they gave the vital impetus is not a *logos* of *epistêmê* as the name suggests but an empirical examination of the methods that can lead to the extension of scientific knowledge and of the criteria for pronouncing certain beliefs to be true knowledge and others to be false. (I am aware that my statements in this paragraph call for much qualification.)

What is the harm in calling that Epistemology? The harm, grave harm, is that we are deluded into thinking that Epistemology and the so-called Philosophy of Mind, etc., give us understanding of what knowledge is and what the mind is. How it is that we know anything is an ultimate mystery; it is one with the ultimate mystery of the mind.

Plato knew that knowledge and mind are ultimate mysteries. There is no explaining of what knowledge is or what mind is. He invented the myth of Reminiscence in recognition of the ultimacy of the reality of knowledge. What does the doctrine of Reminiscence amount to? It amounts to saying that understanding and consciousness come with us; indeed mind is our inner reality, is the reality of our innermost being, that

Plato referred to indifferently as *psuchê*, *nous*, *phronêsis*. Our neuroscientists, biologists, philosophers of mind, will go on trying to catch that reality, the reality of mind, in the brain of humans, the brain of fish, the brain of insects, to no avail; the empirical data they will garner will have its uses, but will not give us understanding of knowledge or of the mind.

D. R. Khashaba

April 6, 2018

XXXI

I SPEAK IN ANGER

I speak in anger. Professional philosophers seem more determined to preserve their treasure of unsolved and unsolvable sophisticated riddles than even to preserve their right to think and to speak freely.

Take the pseudo-puzzle of the Mind-Body in its multifarious metamorphoses or the MoAP (Mother of All Puzzles; they will love this since it can boast kinship with the family of Bombs and Bombast!) I shout to the wind that there is no such a thing as the problem of Consciousness or as the Mind-Body problem. Why is there no such problem? Because - hold your breath! – *because there is no such thing as Consciousness or Mind*. Stay put! Don't jump up in jubilation: I don't mean by this what your allies and mentors the Physicists mean when they speak the same words.

For the hornet swarm of Mind-Body puzzles we have to thank Descartes when he took the whole living, intelligent person (other animals being for him of a different nature) and brutally split it into two non-communicating substances: on the one side a mindless body, an objective spatial extension, and on the other hand a bodiless mind, a separate thinking thing. Ever since, scientists have been happy and content for they secured for themselves all they need in their work, a separate lifeless mindless objective web of shadows (Kant was the only modern philosopher who saw this clearly); and as much as scientists were happy and content and making continuous progress in their game of manipulating their lifeless mindless world of shadows, philosophers have been entrenched in their spooky maze of Unreality. Even good original philosophers have not been able to escape the Cartesian conceptual dungeon.

Is the Mind-Body problem difficult to resolve? My answer is that it cannot be difficult or otherwise because there is no problem in the first place. There is no problem because there is no Mind set

against the Body. The Mind is not a thing, not an entity. The Mind is the Person, or better still is the personality of the person, is the being of the person on the spiritual plane. There is no problem; the problem is that we fail to free ourselves from the grip of the Cartesian conceptual dungeon. This failure to escape the Cartesian trap is fortified by the fact that, in the nature of things, there is one place and only one place where we can find Mind; that one place is inside every one of us individually. Why so? Because Mind – I repeat – is not a thing, not an object; it is the innerness of our whole integrated being. I repeat once again because this is most important: Mind is not a thing or an object but is an activity; not a thing or an object but is the creative intelligence, or better still, the intelligent creativity of our inner reality— the Mind is simply our reality, the reality of our total integrated being. That is why you cannot find the Mind anywhere other than in yourself, and you do not find it as a thing or entity but you find it as intelligent activity, better still, as creative intelligence or intelligent creativity, sheer creativity.

Even in the case of persons near and dear to us we cannot find or see their intelligent reality, their Mind, as we would find or see some objective being. We know the reality, the Mind, of another person in sympathy and empathy and loving care. In language and linguistic exchanges with others (including gestures, symbols and sign-language) we have intimations of the reality of others. When you go out of your way trying to catch Mind (Gilbert Ryle's expression) as you would find something objective as our worthy neuroscientists do, you have already bit the Cartesian bait, and may the gods have mercy on you!

Mystics and poets never questioned the reality and integrity of intelligent personality. Modern philosophers alone are needlessly puzzled as they seek to incarcerate the mind in their conceptual pigeon-holes. Bergson rightly diagnosed their problem.

Where else can we detect or conjecture the reality of Mind? This is a metaphysical question. A metaphysical question cannot be answered by the empirical methods of science nor can it be settled

by reasoning. But to appease our “obstinate questionings” (Wordsworth) we weave myths. We fool ourselves when we pretend they are anything but myths. For myself, I dream along with Spinoza and with Berkeley and with Schopenhauer and offer my own dream of Creative Eternity — dreams that provide us with intelligible worlds where we exercise our creative intelligence as the activity best suited for a being whose very reality is creative intelligence. When empirical scientists taunt philosophers saying that philosophers’ labours along more than twenty-six centuries have resulted in no acknowledged facts nor in any demonstrable truths I reply: Who said that philosophers seek facts or demonstrable truths? Philosophers, leaving facts to empirical scientists and leaving demonstrable theses to mathematicians, vie with the Godhead in dreaming worlds upon worlds whose imaginative reality can be approached by none but divine poets.

Once again: Where other than in our inner reality do we find Minds? I answer: That’s a problem that can neither be resolved empirically nor by

pure reason (Kant). But when I watch my granddaughter's little kittens (only a few weeks old), when I watch them chasing, racing, frolicking, and ask: why do they do that?, the only satisfactory answer I find is that they are enjoying the ripple of life in them. When I find Shelley addressing the Skylark saying: "Teach me half the gladness / That thy brain must know, / Such harmonious madness / From my lips would flow / The world should listen then, as I am listening now" — I say: Here is wisdom beyond the reach of erudition!

D. R. Khashaba

April 13, 2018

XXXII

METAPHYSICS AND REALITY

When Kant was dismayed at the reception of his *Critique of Pure Reason* he wrote *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* to drive home the core message of the first Critique, namely to specify the scope of empirical science and depict what is permissible in metaphysics and what is not. Sadly the *Prolegomena* was as little understood as the *Critique*, not only by Kant's contemporaries but also by successive generations of philosophers to this day. However it is not my principal intention here to write about Kant and his ill-fated great works. I intend to approach the problem of the viability of metaphysics from a different angle.

Is the world reasonable? Before we can tackle this question we have to face another question of a higher

priority. What right have we to demand or expect that the world should conform to reason, our reason? Do we in fact have in our power this highly-vaunted ability or capability called Reason? To look at the state of the human race today, only a member of the race soaked in empty haughtiness would dare confidently to say, “Yes, we do have Reason!” The meekest and the wildest of animal species living in groups would give him the lie. But perhaps my revulsion at the atrocities, stupidities, and lunacies taking place all the time in all corners of the Earth threatens to blind me to the fact that this does not answer the question. The majority of humans may be mad but there are always here and there a few individuals who are sane.

Back to the question: What right have we to demand or expect that the All should conform to reason? And when asking or answering this question the only Reason we have in mind can only be our human reason. Incidentally, it may be that certain animals, birds and insects have a kind of intelligence that is qualitatively different from that working (when it does work) in human beings.

Einstein said that the mystery of the world is its comprehensibility: but what could Einstein, as a mathematician, mean by ‘comprehensibility’? He meant, it seems, that the world obligingly conforms to mathematical formulations. Does that apply to anything more than purely physical quantities? Einstein was among the most broad-minded of scientists, with an active interest in all aspects of human life. Still I don’t think that we can translate his ‘comprehensibility’ into ‘rationality’ or ‘reasonableness’.

So what can our Reason, pure or with the aid of empirical experience (begging Kant’s pardon for this corruption of his terminology) reveal to us of the World? Let us compensate Kant for the corruption of his terminology by accepting *in toto* the gist of his transcendental system. Of the natural (objective) world we can know the forms, relations, and processes of its phenomena, that is, of its particular states of being and of happenings as they appear to us and not an iota beyond that. Of the World as a whole science can know nothing at all, and pure reason can dream to its heart’s content, but all its dreams conflict with and contradict one another (Kant’s Antinomies of Pure Reason), and there is absolutely no way for saying if

any of them speak of the whole. Of morals and values Reason has the privilege to speak and to direct but all that has nothing to do with the external natural world. (This does not exactly represent Kant's position, but this is not the place to go into that.)

What says Plato? But for a difference in language, Plato would agree with Kant as regards knowledge of the outer world. For Plato the outside world is a world of shadows. In respect of the world as a whole and of the world of values, Plato dreams dreams, but with a crucial qualification. Plato calls his dreams dreams and, lest we mistake our dreams for true knowledge, he insists that our dreams must be broken down and shredded by Dialectic (the critical exercise of reason).

So where does all this leave the metaphysician and what is the bearing of all this on our first question? Is the world reasonable? If our question is meant to extend to the actual world or the whole world, then the answer must be: "We can never know". But we – at any rate the thinking few among us – cannot live in a meaningless or in a fragmented world. The human mind demands that the world be whole and be meaningful. So human beings from the earliest times and in

all quarters of the Earth have invented myths, fables, epics, and metaphysical visions. Reflective thinking knows all these creations of the human mind for what they are. They are of the same nature and issue from the same spring as when a lonely man walking through a deserted dark lane whistles to fortify himself against the Unknown. And perhaps it is remarkable that all the myth and fable makers, the poets weaving their epics, all of them know what they are doing, but only the sagacious metaphysicians still think they are reporting on the actual world, as if it is not honour enough for them to be helping to make human life a little less scary, a little more tolerable.

Thus if we ask “Does Metaphysics speak to us of Reality?” my answer would be: Metaphysics creates for us the only Reality that is meaningful to us, the Reality that determines the quality of the life we live. But lest we fall victim to narrow-minded hubris let me add that it is not metaphysics alone that tenders this service to humankind but so also do poetry and art and creative literature. And indeed, since not all individuals have a taste for metaphysics, the finest gifts of metaphysics are transmitted and diffused most widely

not through the works of philosophers but through poetry, drama, fiction, cinema, etc.

D. R. Khashaba

May 31, 2018

XXXIII

CRAZED RAMBLINGS

but not without sense

Someone asks, “What is real?”

This is not a true question. No true question can be asked about what is undetermined; nobody would know what your question is about.

The following would be a permissible answer to the above pseudo-question: “Whatever a person believes is real is for that person real.”

Dr. Johnson ‘refuted’ Berkeley by kicking a stone. The stone was real for Dr. Johnson.

Bishop Berkeley would say to him, “It’s the pain in your foot that is real. But is the pain really in your foot? Or is it rather in your brain? Or better still, in

your mind? Best of all, it's your whole person that has the pain. But your person is not a physical thing, indeed not a thing at all."

Plato overhears the discussion: "That shows you that there can be no reality whatever in the physical world. It's the ideas in the mind that are real. Better still, since the ideas cannot have being by themselves and in themselves, it's the mind and only the mind that is real."

Socrates smiles: 'O miserable humans! You are born innocent babies and die innocent babies. The best of what you deem knowledge is fraught with falsehood. Only when you realize that you know nothing are you freed from the worst ignorance, that of believing that you know anything at all!'"

D. R. Khashaba

June 9, 2018

XXXIV

KANT'S MESSAGE

I have repeatedly deplored the general failure of philosophers to grasp the essence of Kant's transcendental system. The other day, flipping the pages of the Cambridge electronic version of the First Critique, a section rubric in the Introduction by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood caught my eye; it read "The message of the critique". I thought I should read that section to check both my understanding of Kant and the justice of my censure of post-Kantian philosophers. The section opens as follows:

"The Critique of Pure Reason is complex and many-sided. Both its overall message and its meaning for the subsequent history of philosophy defy any easy summary."

I find this unduly sweeping. There is no denying the Critique is “complex and many-sided” but while its convoluted complexity understandably earned Kant Nietzsche’s scathing censure and the aversion of many first-rate philosophers, yet its crucial message is to my mind simple and clear. Kant himself underlines it unmistakably when he characterizes his work as a “Copernican revolution”. I have repeatedly given the gist of it, particularly in “Kant and Plato” (in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009).

The whole of Kant’s message is an unconscious revival of two fundamental insights of Socrates:

(1) Sense impressions in themselves are meaningless; they only become meaningful perceptions when clothed in ideas (forms) from the mind (Kant’s Concepts of the Understanding).

(2) Investigation of phenomena, of things in the outer world, does not reveal the inner reality of things (*noumena*). Empirical science is confined to the phenomenal sphere. Examination of values, moral ideals and purposes pertains exclusively to pure reason.

It's as simple as that. I feel I have exhausted the subject in these few lines. Indeed there is little deserving comment in the rest of the text. But I could not let the following passage go without a word.

“The originality of the Critique can be indicated by focusing on the way it attempts simultaneously to resolve two of the most intractable problems of early modern philosophy, the simultaneous vindication of the principle of universal causality and of the freedom of the human will.”

Thus Professors Guyer and Wood find Kant's originality precisely in Kant's worst bungled failure. As far as I can see Kant's message is as lost on them as on the others. But I have written extensively both on the dogma of causality and on the reality of free will and do not find it suitable to discuss two major themes in a concluding note.

D. R. Khashaba

June 14, 2018

XXXV

ON TRUTH

a note on terminology

I have repeatedly asserted that philosophy proper has nothing to do with truth. The reason why I say that so emphatically, so provocatively, is that I want to bring out most strongly a view that I deem absolutely necessary to rescue philosophy from its present wretched condition, namely the view that philosophy strictly understood has nothing to do with yielding or seeking factual truth, objective truth, truth about the actual world, this type of truth being the proper province of empirical science. This view incidentally would be fully in agreement with the position of Kant's transcendental system had not Kant, yielding to his religious creed, betrayed his own better insight by giving Prac-

tical Reason jurisdiction over (1) the existence of God; (2) the immortality of the soul. This self-betrayal by Kant I reserve for a coming paper.

However ‘truth’ is a protean notion. It has different meanings in different fields of thought (science, history, forensic research, etc.). Most of these different meanings and usages do not clash with my assertion that philosophy is not concerned with truth. But there is a family of truth-meanings that can neither be overlooked nor easily replaced by other terms. There is the holy trinity of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. There is Keats’ “Beauty is truth, truth beauty”. There is Shakespeare’s “This above all: to thine own self be true”. Then comes the immediate incentive that produced me to write this note: I was reading Plato’s immortal *Phaedo* when I came to the concluding words addressed by Socrates to his friends: Socrates was speaking about adorning the soul with her own proper adornments: reasonableness and justice and courage and freedom and *alêtheia* (114e-115a). This word is normally translated ‘truth’, and though in Plato more often than not it means ‘reality’ rather than ‘truth’, here as a virtue among the highest virtues, what word can do it justice? Only ‘Truth’ in the most sublime

sense of the term. And who would wish to distance philosophy from these supreme ideals?

And yet, begging your pardon dear Reader, I will continue to affirm that philosophy has nothing to do with ‘truth’ in the commonsense, quotidian, and empirical meaning of the word, because what brought philosophy to its present miserable condition was that philosophers thought that they had to vie with science in yielding factual knowledge about the objective world. I rely on the intelligence and goodwill of the reader for not charging me with the stupidity of distancing philosophy from the Truth that Socrates finds among the proper adornments of the soul.

D. R. Khashaba

June 23, 2018

XXXVI

REALITY OF THE SOUL

It is not easy to find another notion that equals the spread of the ‘soul’ notion over the face of the earth at all times. It is easy to understand this ubiquity, at least of the primitive version of the notion. In sleep we are often visited by absent relatives and acquaintances, in particular by dear departed ones, and the readiest explanation of this is to imagine that in every one of us there is another copy that can travel separately from the original. This primitive notion still lingers in some quarters but the notion has had a long rich history, and hence it has undergone much change. However I do not intend to trace that history here but to concentrate on that imagined separateness’ of the soul from the rest of the person.

While the notion in Homer is still very much the same primitive idea of a separable copy, when we come to Heraclitus (late sixth century BC) we find a

radically transformed understanding of the notion. For Heraclitus the soul is the inner reality of a human being. Socrates deepens and enriches that understanding. He regularly refers to the soul as that in us which prospers when we do what is morally right and is harmed when we do what is morally wrong. The soul is simply our whole integral person when we are whole integral persons.

Yet the discussion of immortality in Plato's *Phaedo* begins by defining death as the separation of the soul from the body and in my opinion that thoroughly vitiates all the arguments for immortality in the dialogue. Christianity inherited the morally profound, rich understanding together with the (in my opinion) flawed idea of separateness so that we find Descartes in the seventeenth century locating the soul in an organ of the body. To do Descartes justice we may say that he would not have committed this folly but for his dread of the Church and the Inquisition.

The reader will doubtlessly be wondering what I am driving at. Do I side with the 'materialists' who say there is no such thing as the soul? Far from it. What I propose is a novel idea which is not easy to grasp all at

once. To put it in a seemingly paradoxical statement: I reject the separable existence of the soul to affirm the reality of the soul. It is an idea that I have expounded in several of my writings. I will try to present it briefly in what follows.

We human beings consist of successive planes of being integrally united in a human person. We are physical objects subject to all the laws of physics. At the next plane we are subject to the laws of chemistry. At the next plane we are living beings sharing with plants and animals all the characteristics of these and are subject to all the predicaments of these. At the next plane we are thinking beings, a qualification we share with numerous species of animals, insects, and birds. Then we have being on yet another plane which, as far as we know, we human beings alone have: this is the plane of creativity and morality. This is being on the spiritual plane. The distinctive character of being on this plane is spontaneity. This plane of being we may call the Plane of Freedom. This is what, for short, we call the Soul.

Of all these planes of being in which we participate this Spiritual Plane or Plane of Freedom is alone,

I maintain, fully real, real in the truest sense of the word. Thus I say that the soul is not only real, but is all that is truly and wholly real in us, or let us say, the Soul is our reality.

The Soul is not a thing, not a substance, not an object, but is pure act, activity, creativity. Naturally the Empiricists cannot find it, cannot catch it, and will try in vain to find it in the neurons of the brain but will never do, however much they may search and however long they may experiment.

What I have been saying of the Soul is true of the Mind. In Plato *psuchê*, *nous*, *phronsis* are fully interchangeable terms.

Let me end on a personal note: as a nonagenarian I know that death is at my door. I am convinced and content that when I die, when my integrity is disbanded, I will no longer be. What remains of me will sink into the All but I will have no distinct being. I am convinced and am content.

D. R. Khashaba

July 1, 2018

XXXVII

THOUGHTS ON ARGUMENTATION

Any sufficiently intelligent person can find a plausible argument for whatever she or he believes or wants to make others believe. The history of thought – philosophical or scientific or practical – provides sufficient evidence. So all argument – especially between pereons with opposed points of view – is utterly futile. This is an expansion of Kant’s Antinomy of Pure Reason. The only reasonable use of argument is for developing, elaborating, or elucidating a position, bringing out the implications, in friendly dialogue between persons starting from some common ground. Every step in the argument will then be – to borrow a phrase frequently used in Plato’s dialogues, especially in the *Phaedo* – admitted as valid on the agreed presuppositions. Wittgenstein was wise when he said in the preface to the *Tractatus*: “This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already

thought the thoughts which are expressed in it—” (tr. Ogden). This should appear on the title-page of every serious book: I will quote it in my upcoming book. (See *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*.)

You can hardly find two thinkers who had started with more theoretical agreement than the co-authors of *Principia Mathematica*, Russell and Whitehead. But you cannot find two mature philosophical positions more mutually opposed to each other than the positions of those same two thinkers -- as distant from each other as those of Plato and Aristotle.

It seems we humans are fated to exist as isolated islands in the Ocean of Life. On the practical level the exigencies of quotidian living necessitate that we have a modicum of shared pragmatic knowledge; but the deeper anyone of us plunges in the sea of thought the more isolated she or he becomes. It is most tragic, for anyone to find another, whom she or he truly loves, is barricaded behind impenetrable walls -- as if life, simply life in itself, were not tragic enough!

D. R. Khashaba

July 17, 2018

XXXVIII

LANGUAGE AND REALITY

I am convinced that language is an integral aspect of the mystery of Mind.

From my first taste as a kid of the nectar of philosophizing it appeared to me as self-evident that if mind were not of the very essence of Reality, neither being nor intelligence could have come about from any source or by any process. This is an article of faith; it can neither ever be proved nor ever refuted. However, in submission to the Socratic Principle of Philosophical Ignorance, I do not assert my article of faith as a truth. It is not in the power of a human being to dictate to the world outside the human being what it is or what it must be or how it must be. If for no other thing than to escape the corrupting effects of hubris, we have to acknowledge the inescapable limits of human

knowledge. Philosophizing gives us the great boon of living our private lives in intrinsically coherent ideal worlds.

To go back to language that triggered the above flood of reflections: I am convinced that language, thought, understanding, knowledge, intelligence, mind, are all aspects of one and the same ultimate mystery. None of these separate names or aspects is amenable to a final rational explanation. Any and all of these separate aspects can be endlessly studied, analyzed, back-tracked: the pristine virginity of the mystery will remain untapped.

Take language for instance: primitive languages can be studied and analyzed, the origin of language can be traced even to the chirping of birds and the choreography of bees, but if there were not intelligence behind and beneath all that, nothing could have come out of it.

Einstein spoke of the comprehensibility of the universe. I say, if Reality were ultimately anything other than intelligence no being (if there could be any being) would have understood anything at all.

Hence I designate ultimate Reality as Creative Intelligence or Intelligent Creativity.

Alas! How dare we overlook the fly in the ointment? Human beings throughout their history and particularly in our own day, have proved to be the STUPIDEST of all creatures. Their stupidity combined with their greed will exterminate them and relieve the Earth of their burden and of their filth.

D. R. Khashaba

July 28, 2018

XXXIX

PEER REVIEW

Earnestly speaking, I believe that the peer-review system is the chief single factor responsible for the miserable state of professional philosophy. You may exclaim “sour grapes!” I can’t forbid you, but try to give a thought to what follows.

What is the purpose of peer reviewing? To see that the material reviewed is “correct” and that is the death of philosophy. Was Spinoza’s *Ethics* correct? What did Kant’s colleagues and friends think of the First Critique?

Philosophy is NOT a science. The spirit of philosophy is daring imaginative exploration of ideas.

Without that we have stagnant superstitious certainty.

I will just tell one thing that I experienced. In my innocent days I sent a paper titled “Philosophy as Prophecy” to an old and respectable philosophy journal. The Editor sent me an enthusiastic email saying, as I remember: “This is the kind of thing I am looking for.” Unfortunately he did not have the final say. A week later he sent me the remarks of the reviewer. What I still remember of her remarks (later I knew who the reviewer was) is that she was vexed by my referring approvingly to Nietzsche’s paradoxical style. And that was that. (The paper is included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009).

Some system is needed for separating the good from the bad, but not the present system.

D. R. Khashaba

August 9, 2018

XL
BURIED WISDOM

Dedicated to Hubertus Fremerey

Can humanity ever be benefited by the accumulated wisdom of the ages? In one sense and in one sense only the answer is an emphatic YES. The accumulated wisdom of the ages constitutes the common cultural heritage of humanity. The fortunate few of us (pardon the egotism!) can enrich their lives by the gifts of Euripides, Schiller, Wordsworth, Mozart, Salah Jaheen, to pick up names at random. I would happily be a Robinson Crusoe with just a tattered volume of Shelley. But that is not what I had in mind when I put forward my initial question.

Can a sufficient number of common people – the common voters who carry to power Trump's and Putin's and I know not what fascist lunatics even in certain European countries – can sufficient numbers be Buddhist enough or Christian enough or rationalist enough to support policies that would divert the astronomical arms budgets to feed and treat those dying of hunger and disease not only in Africa but even in New York and London?

I know of at least half-a-dozen recent or contemporary writers any one of whose works taken seriously can show the way to the cure of the ailments of human society. I will only mention one name: Erich Fromm. His books are easily accessible and make very pleasant reading.

There is no dearth of wisdom but will it seep deep enough to save humanity?

D. R. Khashaba

August 12, 2018

XLI

THE SOCRATIC ELENCHUS

[In this piece I thought I could contain the ocean in a bucket. I cannot blame readers who find it makes no sense.]

The Socratic elenchus depends on a very simple discovery or insight.

Any statement consists of a relatively stable core conditioned by any number of contingent circumstances. These contingent circumstances are in theory strictly and literally endless.

This gives us two results:

- (1) The possibility of the Socratic elenchus, since Socrates can easily suggest circumstances under which the statement being examined would not be**

true or at least would require modification. The *Lysis* provides an excellent illustration. I maintain that the purpose of Socrates in doing this is to lead the interlocutor to probe deeper and deeper into his mind. Our worthy scholars, following Aristotle, believe that Socrates is searching for definitions that are never attained.

- (2) The Platonic assertion that no determinate formulation of thought or language can be true simply at all times and under all circumstances. Hence the folly of formulating final and definitive philosophies; and hence the need for dialectic to undermine the presuppositions of every philosophical position.**

I hope I have made this clear for the nth time.

D. R. Khashaba

August 11, 2018

XLII

SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

I have been continually denigrating science. I am glad that a remark from a correspondent has given me the opportunity to clear a highly likely misunderstanding of my position. I reproduce below part of my answer to my observant correspondent:

“I will only say this regarding your remark about sublimating science: Scientific work in itself is a creative activity so that devotion to scientific work gives the same spiritual fulfillment as devotion to philosophy, art, or humanitarian service. What I insist on in my writings is that the objective results of scientific investigations do not reveal the inner reality of the things investigated.”

D. R. Khashaba

August 31, 2018

XLIII

DEMONSTRATION IN PHILOSOPHY

I have said this repeatedly before and will say it again and again for it is essential that philosophers absorb it.

It is commonly said that argument and proof are basic tools in philosophy. This is an error, a grave error because it leads to false expectations and harmful practices.

Clear thinking is of course the heart and core of philosophy, but that is creative clear thinking. Its rationality is the outcome of its intrinsic coherence, not its source.

Argument in philosophy is an ancillary tool for exposition and elucidation, not for deriving or reaching conclusions.

It can safely be said that the more astutely a piece of writing (or speech) is argued, the farther away from genuine philosophy it is.

In the works of a creative philosopher like Alfred North Whitehead you will find a good deal of exposition but no direct proof or argument aimed at establishing a position or a proposition.

On the other hand, take two pieces of Leibniz. The Theodicy is a dishonest piece designed to appease the Church and it is astutely argued. The Monadology is a piece of imaginative thinking; you will find little or no proof or demonstration in it.

D. R. Khashaba

September 5, 2018

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Philosophy of Creative Eternity

(*Creative Eternity* and “Eternity and Freedom” jointly)

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